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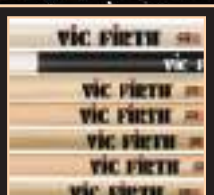

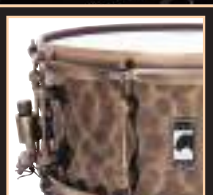

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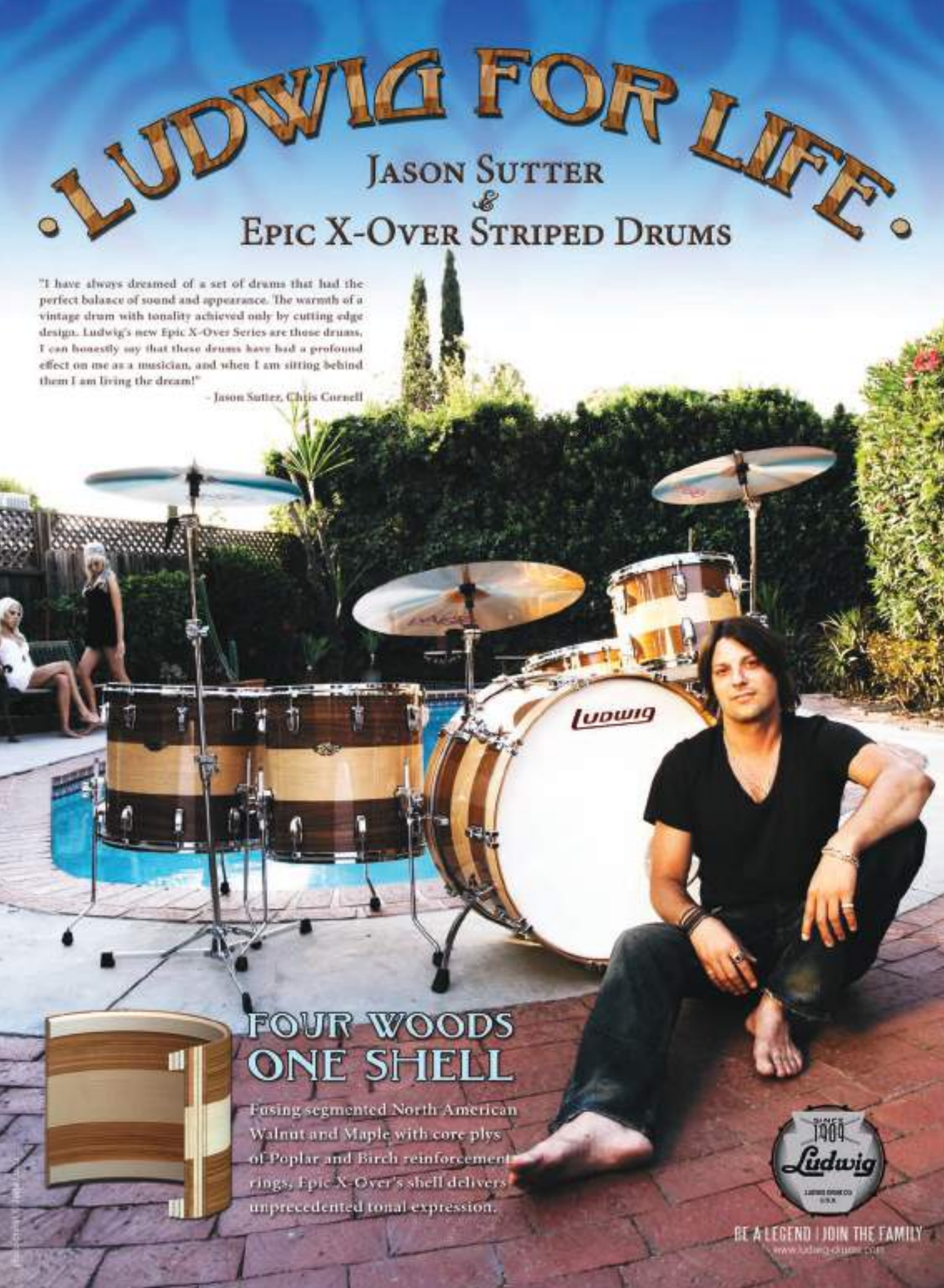

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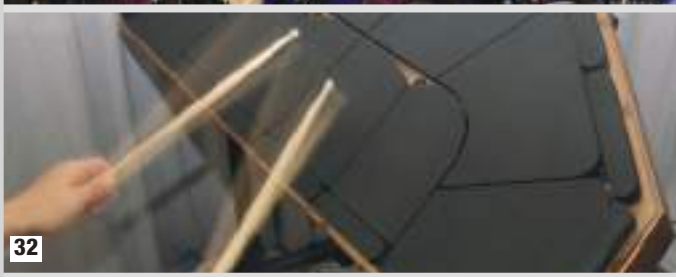
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HE JUST HASN'T EARNED IT YET, DUDE

I didn't want to yell at him. I mean, you really never want to *yell* at readers, no matter what they might say to you—and in twenty-three years, I never had. But you know what? This time I'm glad I did.

The conversation started just like it had many times before, with a parent, an amateur drummer himself, calling the *MD* office to request that we do a story on his child. After watching a couple YouTube clips of the kid playing along to Led Zeppelin tracks—he looked to be about ten or eleven—I could tell he was pretty good but not particularly advanced for someone his age. When I told the father this, emphasizing strongly that it didn't mean his son didn't have a drumming career in his future but also that it was far too early to tell, he got insistent: "How about just a small story?"

"Sir," I said calmly, "I just don't think it's appropriate right now. He needs to develop as a drummer, eventually join a band and make some records—get some experience."

"But his teacher says he's great."

"He does seem to be fairly skilled," I offered, "but again, he's very young. Please keep supporting him, though, and maybe he'll become really good someday and get in a successful musical situation. And when that day comes, I'll be happy to talk more about the possibility of his being interviewed. Right now, though, he's not ready."

"Here's an idea…what if you run a feature every month on young, unknown drummers—he could be in that!"

I'd heard that suggestion before—always from the parent of a precocious drummer. "Sir, how exactly would that serve our readers? The point of reading *Modern Drummer* is to learn from drummers who play in professional settings. And to be frank, I think it would be a disservice to your child to have a story written about him before he's done anything to deserve it; his peers will likely think he pulled some strings to get coverage and then lose respect for him, plus he'll have set unnecessarily high expecta—"

"You need to take some editorial chances," he cut me off. "Think outside the box!"

At that point it was clear to me that this parent in fact didn't have his child's best interest at heart. And that's what made me lose it. Because with the right kind of parental encouragement—positive reinforcement coupled with continual, realistic evaluation of progress—this kid *could* turn out to be something. But the way this "stage dad" was not even listening to me as I tried to give him the best advice I could…it made me realize he was way more into the idea of telling people that his kid was in *MD* than actually helping his son become a better player.

I could feel my forehead start to sweat.

"Dude!" I yelled. (*Did I just call a stranger "dude"? Oh, this isn't going well.…*) "Dude! I mean…sir! Here's what you need to do: Keep the kid in lessons, back off, and call me in five years when he gets a gig."

"I bet you don't even *have* kids, 'Mr. *Modern Drummer*,'" he spat. Click. Dial tone. Grrrrr.

Well, I might not be proud of losing my cool, but at least I wasn't the one who hung up. Ha! And, for the record, I do have kids, and yes, I'll be extremely proud if any of them one day decides to be a professional drummer. But I'm going to make sure they know what's up: This is one dream that's going to require a lot of work, a ton of self-evaluation, and great wells of humility. I truly believe making sure they understand that is more important than any drum lesson they'll ever have.

I hope I can follow my own advice when the time comes. And I *really* hope my friends are honest enough to tell me if I'm not—and that I'm smart enough to listen.

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CALVIN RODGERS

Thank you, *MD*, for the inspiring articles in your March 2010 issue. Calvin Rodgers' tips for success in drumming (practice, listen, be patient, pray, invest) and David Garibaldi's Afropop-based beats—outstanding!

Anna Rosita, via Facebook

THE FLAMING LIPS

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the April cover story on the Flaming Lips. Steven Drozd is the man!

Jon Lauterer, via Facebook

KENT DRUMS

I'm a drum department employee at Guitar Center in Buffalo, New York, and I just read "What Are Kent Drums?" in the It's Questionable column in *MD*'s April issue. The article failed to mention that Kent Drums is back in business and better than ever. Brian Kent, the grandson of the original owner, Ed Kent, has taken over the business. We recently took in one of his sets, and it's beautiful. The drums are much better than they used to be, and they're all completely custom made. Gone are the days of the cheaply made kits that your article pointed out. Thought I'd pass along this info, as I have one of their finest kits right here in front of me.

Zach Acard

KNOW NO LIMITS

I really enjoyed Mike Dawson's editorial in the April issue of *MD*. I'm an old coot who has played a lot of styles, from corps on the field to various swing/jazz bands, college percussion ensembles, and even symphony orchestras. Mike's thoughts struck a nerve with me—a real connection. I recall back in high school everyone wanted to play like Neil Peart. If you didn't at least *try* to emulate "Tom Sawyer," you weren't considered a real drumming threat. I hated that. It caused me to avoid Rush like the plague for a while, but that's a different story. (Now I'm a fully converted fan!) I wanted to play like Jeff Porcaro and Vinnie Colaiuta, with the added musicality of Steve Gadd and the power of John Bonham and Peter Erskine—real humble aspirations. Needless to say, I practiced my butt off for many years—and I still enjoy doing so, even today at forty-six.

Fast forward to the late '80s and early '90s, when I was playing in college bands and meddling with studio time here and there. The times I got the most compliments on my playing were when I was just letting myself "be me," in the pocket, in the musical moment. Every time I tried to sound like someone else—Keith Moon, Chad Smith, etc.—even the soundman would look at me with that tsk-tsk expression on his face. It just didn't work. It wasn't authentic. And *that* is the key word for any musician or artist: authenticity, being comfortable in your own skin and at ease with your skills.

What I've told students and anyone else who is interested in learning from a drumming senior citizen (not quite, but getting there fast) is this: Listen, listen again, and listen one more time. Learn some reading skills, then go back and study your favorites, listening yet again for something new. Find people who you think won't appeal to you, and listen to them. (*MD* is a great resource for this.) Absorb all kinds of music; be open! Try to find something positive to say about any drummer you see. And finally, practice, practice, practice. Don't stop. And if someone hammers you with negativity, see if there's anything that can be learned from their point of view, but don't let it stop you from going for it. Drumming is the best. Music is art that's doled out a beat at a time.

Jimmy Knight

EDGAR WINTER'S BOBBY RAMIREZ

I enjoyed the What Do You Know About…? article in your April issue on the talented and overlooked drummer Bobby Ramirez, as I have followed both Johnny and Edgar Winter since their early days. I have a correction in the "Know These Too…" sidebar on Randy Zehringer. Randy played on the *Johnny Winter And* studio album, but not on *Live Johnny Winter And*. That incredible album features another much-overlooked drummer, Bobby Caldwell—who I was fortunate to see live with the lineup of Johnny Winter, Rick Derringer, and Randy Joe Hobbs circa 1970. I would love to see an interview with Mr. Caldwell, who I understand is still an active player. Thanks!

Jim Ball

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Red Hot Chili Peppers' CHAD SMITH

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I love the popping snare tone you get on Chili Peppers records and on Glenn Hughes's *Music For The Divine*. Can you tell me the drum, heads, and tuning you used to get the snare sound on *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*? Did you use the same choices on later Chili Peppers records and with Glenn Hughes?
Brian Cooper

The snare drum is a very important voice in your drumkit. I hadn't really found my voice until *Blood Sugar*. The drum I used on that record was a '70s-era 5½x14 Ludwig brass Black Beauty with a Remo coated Ambassador head. [Chad uses Pearl drums exclusively on stage.] The tuning was very tight, hence the high "pop" you referred to. I like that sound, as it cuts through well and adds an exciting personality to the songs. On more recent records, I've been using a variety of deeper brass snares, but I still crank them up pretty tight. With the extra depth, I can get good tone and body along with the pop.

That said, it all depends on the music you're playing, the room you're recording in, and who's twirling the knobs behind the desk. All of that will be part of the end result. Oh, I almost forgot...and *you!* You're the most important thing. So always be yourself. *That* sounds the best.

Tony Wolliscroft

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MARCO MINNEMANN

Kreator's multi-genre drum scientist insists: once metal, always metal.

During a recent live streaming broadcast from Don Lombardi's Drum Channel, drum sensation Marco Minnemann and metal speed demon Derek Roddy traded licks and musical concepts with speed and ambidexterity that seemed physically impossible. Minnemann, who has been touring the globe with the German metal icons Kreator, has taken metal drumming to new heights by incorporating his four-limb mastery into this aggressive and athletic genre, typically fueled by rapid double bass flurries and blistering blast beats. "What most people don't realize is that I've always been a metal guy," Marco says. "I grew up playing metal, and one of the first bands I was in [Freaky Fukin Weirdoz] was mainly metal."

Juels Thomas

Regarding the technique involved in today's fast-paced metal drumming, Minnemann explains, "It's more about developing endurance. When I start a tour, it takes three to four shows before I build up the endurance I need. So I'll switch back and forth from single strokes to double strokes to build my stamina and power until my endurance increases. My foot technique is heel-up, working from the ankle, with most of the power coming from the upper leg muscle. I also swivel my foot a little to help relax the leg muscles, and I currently use the DW 8000 longboard pedals."

Minnemann has also been touring with the U-Z (Ultimate Zero) Project, along with former U.K. and King Crimson members, performing music from these classic prog-rock supergroups. The band is an offshoot of the prog/fusion unit UKZ and features original U.K. violinist/keyboardist Eddie Jobson, Minnemann, Trey Gunn (ex–King Crimson), guitarist Alex Machacek, and vocalist Aaron Lippert. U-Z has been touring the world in various configurations, with such renowned players as Adrian Belew, John Wetton, Tony Levin, and Greg Howe, and Marco has shared double-drumming duties with the legendary Simon Phillips. The next leg of the U-Z tour will feature Minnemann drumming along with kit wizard Mike Mangini.

Minnemann, who's a prolific composer and multi-instrumentalist—he's released a new recording every year since 1996—continues his unique artistic expression with his latest effort, *Catspoon*. The album is a diverse collection of styles and sounds, from vocal punk to pop to instrumental soundscapes to fiery fusion, all sprinkled with Minnemann's magic dust: amazing over-the-top drumming. "*Catspoon* is one of my most musically balanced recordings," Marco says. "It has beautiful melodic ballads as well as intense instrumentals. And I am currently writing new material and focusing more on sounds—especially room sounds—and developing style with space."

In recent months, Minnemann has performed as a hired gun on countless recordings with artists from around the globe, covering practically every musical genre. A recent and very interesting collaboration came with the mysterious L.A.-based artist Dr. Zoltan Øbelisk, on the album *Why I Am So Wise, Why I Am So Clever, And Why I Write Such Good Songs…* Here Minnemann's challenging acoustic tracks battle head on with Dr. Zoltan's complicated and impressive programmed drumming, which was created using Cubase and Toontrack's Drumkit From Hell. It's rhythmic mind bending that blurs the line between acoustic and electronic drumming.

Minnemann reports, however, that his crowning compositional achievement will be revealed this year, when the long-awaited "Normalizer 2" project is finally unveiled. "Normalizer 2" is a fifty-one-minute drum solo that was given to various musicians who then composed and produced their own music over the drum performance. Separate versions will be released with guitarists Mike Keneally, Trey Gunn, Alex Machacek, John Czajkowski, and Minnemann himself.

In terms of the big picture, Marco enjoys the liberating balance between touring, recording, and composing. "I like the fact that I can tour with a band and just sit behind the drums and play, with no other responsibilities," he says. "Then I come home and focus on creating new music and challenging myself with new ideas that inspire me. But I also enjoy doing clinics and festivals. They're really my only opportunity to express and promote my music, my educational materials, and my drumming career to other drummers."

All this activity makes you wonder when Minnemann has time to practice—but he somehow manages to find the time. "When I practice now," the drummer says, "I focus mainly on stylistic challenges like playing cleaner and with more dynamics. But I still challenge myself with new patterns to keep things interesting and spark new ideas." **Mike Haid**

BREAKOUT **BEATS**

Marco Minnemann began making ripples from across the pond in the mid-1990s with his exploratory pop/metal group Illegal Aliens. But it wasn't until the 1998 release of his debut solo recording, *The Green Mindbomb*, that drummers in the States took serious notice of the German drummer. Odd-meter precision, advanced metric modulation skills, speed, and compositional versatility made *Mindbomb* a serious calling card for Minnemann's amazing talents. It was shortly thereafter that the drummer began dropping jaws at major drum festivals.

BUBBA BRYANT

The veteran drummer's newest gig with a Motown powerhouse was too Tempting to pass up.

The last time *MD* spoke with session man and road warrior William "Bubba" Bryant, he was on tour as drummer and musical director with teen sensations the Backstreet Boys, in support of their 1999 album *Millennium.* That recording earned the most sales of the '90s, garnering multiple Grammy nominations and a spot in the top ten best-selling albums of all time. Needless to say, the tour was huge.

BREAKOUT **BEATS**

In 1981, having just gotten off the road after his first major tour, Bubba Bryant was asked by saxophonist Ronnie Laws to take part in Laws' album *Solid Ground.* The title track received considerable radio airplay and has been included on many subsequent compilations. In contrast to the more straight-ahead B section, the A section of the track features great interplay between the kick drum and bass guitar on syncopated hits. With no consistent hi-hat or ride cymbal to ground the beat, the first bar of the two-measure groove lands on the 1 and the second bar skips the 1, establishing a pattern that's subtle *and* funky.

But a lot has changed since we last heard from Bryant. "After I got done with the Backstreet Boys," he says, "things got kind of weird. The following year was when 9/11 happened. Things changed for a lot of people in the music industry. People weren't willing to tour anymore, people got kind of afraid of going out, and it got shaky for me too."

Bubba took the changes in stride. "I was writing music for TV during that time, for shows like *Moesha* and *Sister, Sister*," he recalls, "and I was teaching at Musicians Institute and working the L.A. club circuit with an incredible jazz keyboardist named Rob Mullins. Working with Rob was a learning experience because he's such a genius at what he does, and he needed a drummer who could not only drive the band but also write music."

As time went on, Bryant started to ease into the idea of touring once again. "There are a lot of reasons why I decided to go back on the road," he says. "Whenever I have the opportunity to play live, that's where my heart is. I enjoy being on stage more than anyone could imagine, and the opportunity with the Temptations came up at a time when I really wanted to go back out."

Musicians Institute vocal instructor Robert "Masta" Edwards and Bryant became close while teaching together, and eventually the dots were connected. "Masta was good friends with Temptation Ron Tyson," Bubba says. "One day he called saying the Temptations were looking for a drummer and he was putting my name in with Ron. Ron called me, and I got to talk to [founding member] Otis Williams. Otis said they were still considering one other drummer, who was on the road with Mary Wells. If things didn't work out with him, they would consider me. Finally we talked again and Otis said the other drummer didn't want to leave Mary, so I was it."

Bryant was on "Cloud Nine" from the start. "Here I am, meeting Otis Williams," he says. "The Temptations are here because of him; he started the whole thing. All of them were so cool, personable, and friendly. They made me feel like I was at home." The drummer needed to learn the show quickly, and he offers advice on how to do just that. "I dedicated myself to making sure that every show got better. I did my best to listen, watch, take notes from everyone, and have a good attitude to move forward in the proper way."

Bryant can be heard driving the Temptations' signature sounds across the country, and he will soon release a solo project tentatively titled *It's About Time*, a double album featuring instrumental and vocal tracks. **Drew Schultz**

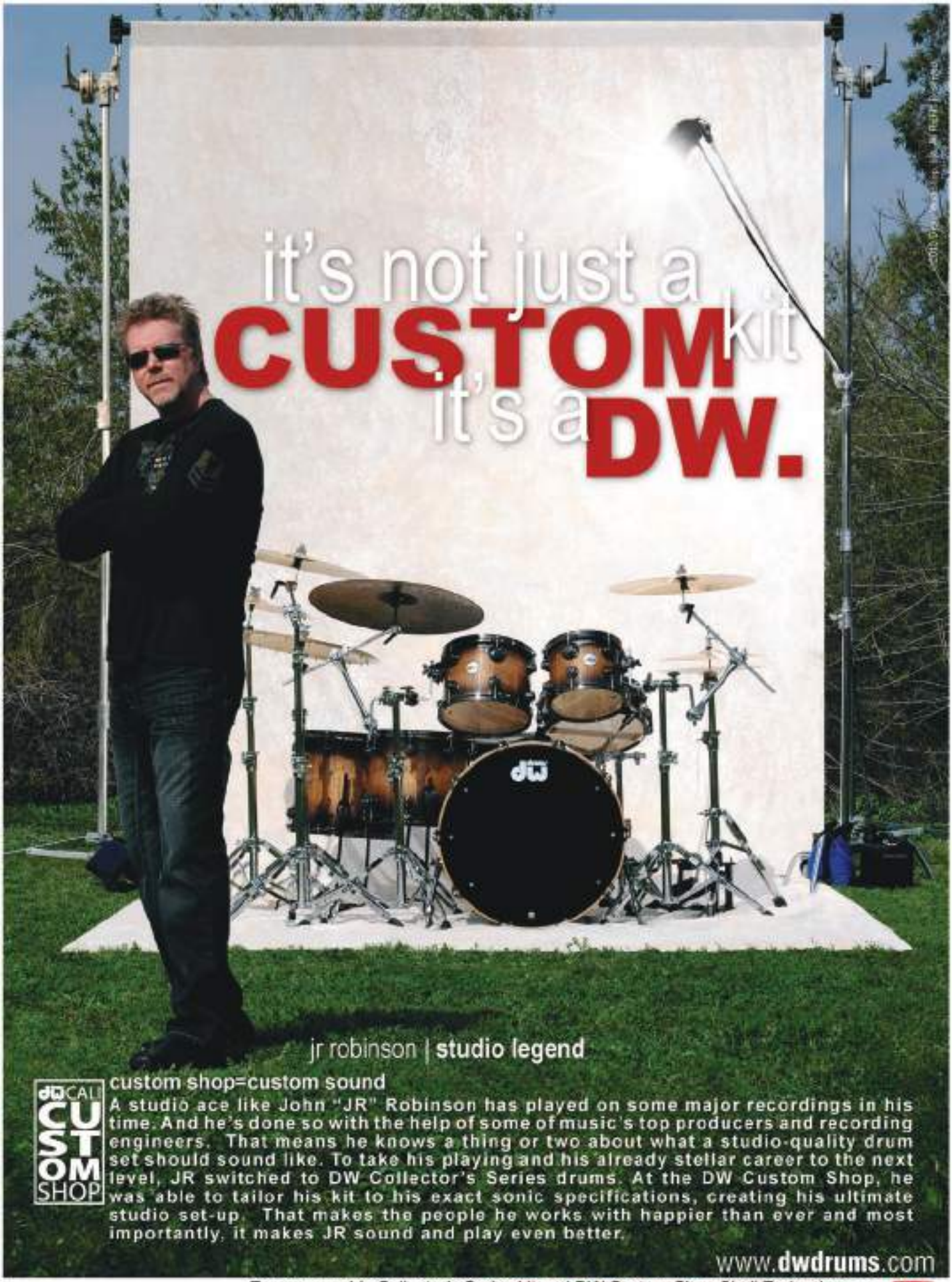
OUT NOW ON CD

Jason Bittner appears on the reissue of Stigmata's 1994 album, *Hymns For An Unknown God*, and 1998 album, *Do Unto Others*, which have been packaged together under the title *The Wounds That Never Heal.* "I'm really excited about the release of this CD," Bittner says, "primarily because it shows where I was at as a player before I became 'known' with Shadows Fall. I'm also extremely proud of the *Hymns For An Unknown God* tracks, because that's still one of my favorite recorded performances. It's also what got me noticed by *MD* [On The Move column, November 1995] for the first time!"

On his new album, *Timshel*, drummer **Dan Weiss** weaves elements of different compositional styles and knowledge of Indian rhythms into the language of jazz. "Each piece in this record draws upon a specific inspiration that has captured my curiosity and imagination the last couple of years," Weiss writes in the liner notes. "The intention was to take the essence of each of these inspirations and to create a musical narrative… intended to be listened to as one piece, uninterrupted."

ALSO **ON THE SHELVES**

ARTIST/ALBUM	DRUMMER
OK Go: *Of The Blue Colour Of The Sky*	**Dan Konopka**
The Wishing Tree: *Ostara*	**Paul Craddick**
White Hills: *White Hills*	**Kid Millions**
Jean-Michel Pilc: *True Story*	**Billy Hart**
Kat Parra & the Sephardic Music Experience: *Dos Amantes*	**Paul Van Wageningen**
Ben Goldberg: *Go Home*	**Scott Amendola**
Steve Colson: *The Untarnished Dream*	**Andrew Cyrille**
Danny Barnes: *Pizza Box*	**Matt Chamberlain**
Norrbotten Big Band: *The Avatar Sessions*	**Peter Erskine**
Testament: *The Formation Of Damnation, Deluxe Tour Edition*	**Paul Bostaph**
John Carey: *Son Of The House*	**Frank Bellucci**
Hail The Size: *I Can't Die In L.A.*	**Matt North**
Curt Berg & the Avon Street Quintet: *At Stagg Street Studio*	**Bill Berg**
Sevendust: *Cold Day Memory*	**Morgan Rose**
Jonny Lang: *Live At The Ryman*	**Barry Alexander**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TOMMY ALDRIDGE

The hard-rock legend is still making a hellish racket out of "heavenly downloads."

Tommy Aldridge has been bringing straightforward, physical drumming to the world's stages and studios since the early 1970s, with Black Oak Arkansas, Pat Travers, Gary Moore, Ted Nugent, Ozzy Osbourne, and a bevy of other heavy hitters. He recently drummed with Thin Lizzy, holding down the beat for the band's *One Night Only* tour. "It's funny, because I'm the antithesis of [original Lizzy drummer] Brian Downey," Aldridge says. "He was a lighter player with more of a swing feel, almost big-band-ish in some of the stuff he played."

Despite the contrasting styles, Aldridge played the gig full force, leaning on feel more than chops. "I tried to faithfully reproduce the vibe of what was going on with those tunes," he says. "I played with a little more authority, a little more teeth and hair. I really wanted to make it a bit more cutting edge."

Aldridge has always had a unique ability to make drum grooves his own, even if a given part was written by another drummer. "That's an MO of mine," Tommy says. "I'm not the most technical player, but I always find a way to get out whatever I hear in my brain and enhance the groove that's already there."

Despite his star-studded résumé, Aldridge says he never bought into the rock-star mentality and lifestyle. "It's always been a craft or an art to me, not a lifestyle," he explains. "When I sit down at the kit and play something completely inspired, it's called creativity. That's a gift that's given to each and every one of us that you can't get at PIT or Berklee. It can't be taught. When I'm able to express my art on my instrument, it comes as a heavenly download. My only responsibility is to take it out and share it with as many people as I can."

While Aldridge is always ready for the next gig, his priorities have shifted over the years. "I love playing as much as I ever have, but the eight-month touring schedule just doesn't accommodate me emotionally anymore," he says. "As long as I can take care of myself physically, I hope to continue for a long, long time." **Steven Douglas Losey**

BREAKOUT **BEATS**

Tommy Aldridge's studio debut was on the 1972 recording by Black Oak Arkansas, *Keep The Faith*. It was a mediocre offering with dreadfully produced drums, even for that era. Jump fifteen years ahead, and the opposite can be said about the 1987 Ozzy Osbourne and Randy Rhoads album, *Tribute*. Recorded with axe-slinger Rhoads in 1981 and '82 (the guitarist died in a plane crash soon after, in March '82), the live opus accentuates Aldridge's prowess, including his double-bass-soaked solo on "Steal Away (The Night)." Throughout, Aldridge's playing is hard hitting and mighty. Early testaments to the drummer's double bass attack can also be found on YouTube; try searching for "Black Oak Arkansas drum solo 1973."

ON TOUR

Darren King with MuteMath • **Van Romaine** with Nena • **Chad La Roy** with Cavo • **Dave Collingwood** with Yann Tiersen • **Matt Murphy** with Charo

BLOG INSIGHTS

Quotes pulled from the Blog page at moderndrummer.com.

"When touring internationally it's important to be aware that power voltage and wireless frequencies differ in various parts of the world. It's pretty easy to blow up that drum machine or in-ear unit you just paid through the teeth for."
—**Seven Antonopoulos** of Leaves' Eyes

"You can be a top session musician today from the comfort of your own garage, bedroom, living room—even your bathroom." —Pink's **Mark Schulman**

PROGRESSIVE JAZZ SNARE

I came across this sweetheart at a local Goodwill store. It's in perfect condition and has all the original parts except for the batter head. I believe it's a Gretsch "anniversary sparkle." The inside has the original paint on the shell, which according to my research dates it around 1957 or 1958. Is this a Max Roach model or a Progressive Jazz? The drum is 4x14 and has eight lugs.
Bob Mann

"That's an easy one," says drum historian Harry Cangany. "It's a 1958 Gretsch 4x14 Progressive Jazz model in 'anniversary sparkle,' aka diamond sparkle, which was the seventy-fifth-anniversary finish for Gretsch. This is the second series of Progressive Jazz. The first was called Max Roach Progressive Jazz and featured tube lugs and the Fast Tension butt plate. These drums are very sought after, especially in this finish. Great example. It might bring $2,000."

The Doctor Is In

by Asif Khan, M.D.

HAND RASH

I've developed a rash on the palm of my right hand (I'm right-handed), and it doesn't look like the usual calluses I get from playing drums. The rash started about six months ago and is rough, dry, and itchy. I can't play because of the pain. Is this something I should be worried about?
Tim M.

Many drummers mistake a callus (a roughened patch of skin due to excessive or repeated contact) for a serious skin rash. You are correct, however—this is no callus.

Let's review some very common skin rashes of the hands. One of the most common is called contact dermatitis, which is a rash that's caused when you touch something the body doesn't like. This may or may not be allergic in nature, and it happens after you touch things like poison ivy, chemicals, or latex. If you happen to have hay fever or asthma, an associated condition called atopic dermatitis, or eczema, can be inherited.

These conditions result in dry skin that occurs occasionally as the seasons change or when an allergy or asthma flares up. If severe enough, they can look like very problematic or rare skin disorders, including dyshidrotic hand dermatitis, psoriasis, or an advanced form of eczema called hyperkeratotic hand eczema. I will focus on psoriasis, as this condition is fairly common and sounds closest to what you're describing.

What causes psoriasis? It's difficult to say, but this disease, which can flare up from time to time, may have a genetic cause. Things to avoid if you have psoriasis: alcohol, smoking, and high levels of stress.

Once you're diagnosed with psoriasis, how do you treat it? There are different levels of severity. For milder cases, doctors will often prescribe medium- to high-strength steroid creams or emollients. For advanced stages, things like ultraviolet light therapy and exotic, expensive medications called immunomodulators are often suggested. There are many other treatments for psoriasis, but you want to start right away in order to prevent the development of arthritis, which occurs in about 20 percent of patients with psoriasis. In your case, the rash sounds severe, so you should definitely have it checked out by your doctor.

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MODERN DRUMMER 2010 READERS POLL Results

This year **the most prestigious poll in the drumming community** once again highlights the contributions of some of our most revered players—and introduces several new names to the mix. Thanks to all who voted, and congratulations to the great players who garnered special attention this time out.

Hall Of Fame
HAL BLAINE

Quite possibly the most recorded drummer in history—certainly the one who's on more hits from rock's golden period than any other player—Hal Blaine has come to be known as *the* symbol of "get it done fast, get it done right" studio drumming. With the Wrecking Crew, the session ensemble that essentially owned the pop charts in the mid to late '60s, Blaine played on hundreds of hit singles, dozens of which went to number one. We've been studying his work for the better part of five decades, and drummers will likely still be studying it fifty years from now.

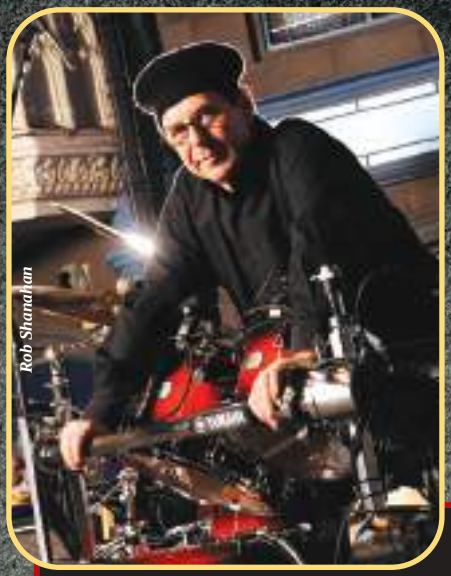
MVP
MAX WEINBERG

It was quite a year for Max Weinberg, recipient of *Modern Drummer*'s inaugural MVP award. From playing on Bruce Springsteen's acclaimed 2009 studio album, *Working On A Dream*, to proudly joining his son, Jay, on the cover of *MD* and watching Jay sub for him with the E Street Band while he was committed to performing on *The Tonight Show With Conan O'Brien*—to watching in shock as O'Brien's tenure came to a quick and unceremonious end—Mighty Max sure experienced his share of drama in recent months. Unlike what NBC did to Conan, though, *MD* readers stood by their man and recognized him for his achievements.

Alex Solca

Vintage Hal

Danny Clinch


Rob Shanahan

Rock **ANTON FIG**

The *Late Show With David Letterman* drummer, who's held his post since 1986, had a particularly strong year, appearing on original Kiss guitarist Ace Frehley's well-received *Anomaly* album, as well as on guitarist Joe Bonamassa's *Ballad Of John Henry* CD and *Live From The Royal Albert Hall* DVD.

2. Barry Kerch
3. Todd Sucherman
4. Travis Barker
5. Ryan Yerdon

Chad Lee

Metal **JAMES "THE REV" SULLIVAN**

In his brief career, Avenged Sevenfold's drummer impressed legions with his blistering chops. This year fans showed big respect for the Rev, who died last December while the band was working on its fifth album.

2. Lars Ulrich
3. Joey Jordison
4. Tomas Haake
5. Chris Adler

Christopher Otazo

Prog **GAVIN HARRISON**

Porcupine Tree's adventurous rhythmatist is tops once again with prog fans, who continue to gobble up his every project, including PT's latest album, *The Incident*; collaborations with O5Ric; Porcupine Tree singer/guitarist Steven Wilson's *Insurgentes* album; O.S.I.'s *Blood*; and Harrison's own new instructional book/DVD package, *Rhythmic Designs*.

2. Mike Portnoy
3. James "The Rev" Sullivan
4. Neil Peart
5. Danny Carey

Sayre Berman

R&B **AARON SPEARS**

With two recent DVDs on the shelf—*Kick Snare Hat*, with his peers Cora Coleman-Dunham, Nisan Stewart, and Gerald Heyward (all featured on the cover of *MD*'s July '09 issue), and his own *Beyond The Chops*—the Usher/American Idols Live drummer cranked up his already noteworthy rep on the modern R&B scene.

2. Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson
3. Daniel Glass
4. Zoro
5. Chris "Daddy" Dave

Sayre Berman

Jazz **KEITH CARLOCK**

Between touring with Steely Dan, releasing his DVD *The Big Picture*, and collaborating with heavy hitters like Wayne Krantz and Tim Lefebvre, Keith Carlock continues to prove why he's one of the most popular drummers in jazz (and beyond).

2. Steve Smith
3. Peter Erskine
4. Alphonse Mouzon
5. Brian Blade

Claude Dufresene

Fusion **MORGAN ÅGREN**

Fusion comes in many forms, and Swedish iconoclast Morgan Ågren has been responsible for some particularly exploratory examples. The longtime drummer with his own Mats/Morgan Band has enjoyed a steadily growing reputation in the States and abroad, and this year *MD* readers showed their recognition and appreciation in a big way.

2. Dave Weckl
3. Steve Smith
4. Vinnie Colaiuta
5. Tony Royster Jr.

Alex Solca

Kurt Allison

Studio
VINNIE COLAIUTA

At this point in time, it's entirely appropriate to call Vinnie Colaiuta a studio legend, able to nail a killer take in a breathtaking variety of musical situations. That he's also one of the most advanced conceptualists and technicians *ever* makes his powers that much more astounding.

2. Russ Miller
3. Josh Freese
4. Keith Carlock
5. Kenny Aronoff

Country
RICH REDMOND

Jason Aldean is the country-music story of the year, and his powerhouse band featuring Rich Redmond is a big reason why. Check out Rich's feature in this issue for clues to his highly appealing drum prowess.

2. David Northrup
3. Jim Riley
4. Dave McAfee
5. John Spittle

Clinician
RICH REDMOND

Redmond doesn't only slay 'em live, on record, and on TV, he offers up some serious wisdom and experience in clinics as well.

2. David Northrup
3. Todd Sucherman
4. Jim Riley
5. Daniel Glass

Up & Coming ELLIOT JACOBSON

Pop singer Ingrid Michaelson has recently become a hugely popular presence on TV soundtracks and on stage, and drummer Elliot Jacobson has enjoyed the exposure the gig has offered him, impressing audiences with his skills and taste.

2. Austin Curcuruto
3. Joe Rickard
4. Steven Spence
5. Justin Faulkner

Deborah Lopez

Percussionist LUIS CONTE

House percussionist on *Dancing With The Stars*, first-call studio player with superstars like Colbie Caillat and James Taylor…Luis Conte is never far from the limelight—or drummers' consciousness.

2. Alex Acuña
3. John Mahon
4. Pete Lockett
5. Sheila E

Alex Solca

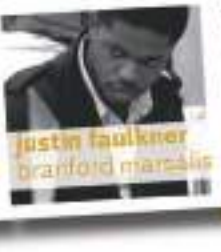
Educational Package
THE COMMANDMENTS OF EARLY RHYTHM AND BLUES DRUMMING (BOOK/CD) BY ZORO AND DANIEL GLASS

2. Methods & Mechanics (DVD) by Todd Sucherman
3. The Language Of Drumming (DVD) by Benny Greb
4. The Total Rock Drummer (book/CD) by Mike Michalkow
5. In The Groove (DVD reissue) by Anton Fig

Recorded Performance
RICH REDMOND, *WIDE OPEN* (JASON ALDEAN)

2. Anton Fig, *Anomaly* (Ace Frehley)
3. James "The Rev" Sullivan, *Live In The LBC* (CD/DVD) (Avenged Sevenfold)
4. Barry Kerch, *The Sight Of Madness* (DVD) (Shinedown)
5. Carter Beauford, *Big Whiskey & The GrooGrux King* (Dave Matthews Band)

YOU DECIDED THE WINNERS...



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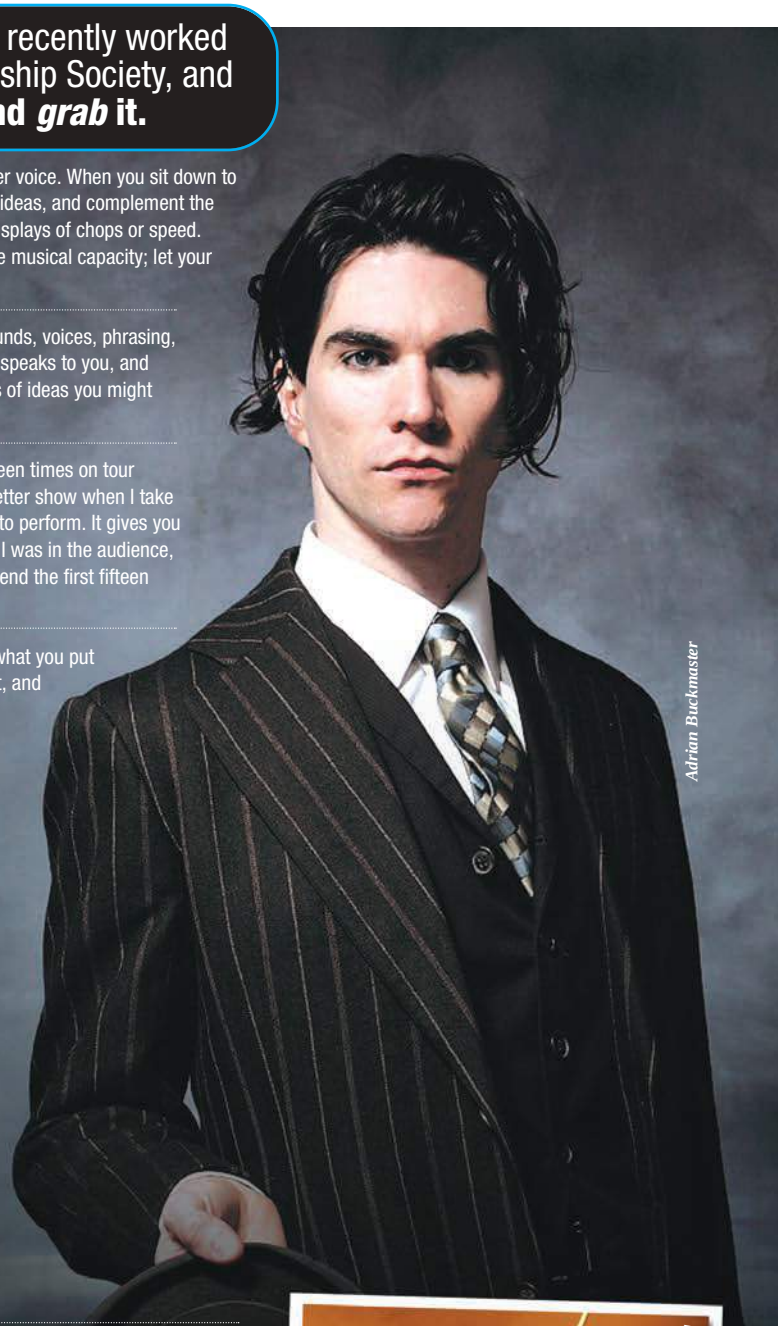
GIMME 10!
PRACTICAL ADVICE FROM PROS WHO KNOW

BRIAN VIGLIONE

The busy Dresden Dolls drummer, who's also recently worked with Nine Inch Nails, the World/Inferno Friendship Society, and the Cliks, says: You want it? **Go out there and *grab* it.**


Adrian Buckmaster

1 **THE DRUMS ARE AN EXTENSION OF YOU.** Think of them as another voice. When you sit down to play, make 'em talk. Infuse them with your personality, feelings, and ideas, and complement the other voices in the group. Don't feel intimidated by others' dizzying displays of chops or speed. Focus on what you can say with the drums. The drumset carries such immense musical capacity; let your creativity shine though with power, passion, and eloquence.

2 **KEEP YOUR EARS OPEN.** All sorts of music can be an influence. Sounds, voices, phrasing, moods, dynamics, imagery, etc. Explore all kinds of music, find what speaks to you, and incorporate it into your own unique voice. You never know what kinds of ideas you might unlock within yourself.

3 **WARM UP.** Hit the stage hot and ready to go. There have definitely been times on tour where I'm tired or think I feel fine, but I always, without fail, have a better show when I take time to stretch, warm up my hands, and get into the right headspace to perform. It gives you and the audience a strong opening from the first song. When I think about it, if I was in the audience, would I want to see the band come out ripping, or would I want to see them spend the first fifteen minutes of the show dogging it because they weren't ready?

4 **PRACTICE DISCIPLINE.** Develop a strong work ethic. You get back what you put in. If you have a musical vision, have the discipline to hone it, refine it, and lay it down solid. Seek out new challenges. Don't be afraid to push yourself hard or ask questions along the way.

5 **BE RESOURCEFUL.** Whether you're hustling your group or you're running solo, you need all the help and resources you can get, especially at the beginning. Put the word out and help each other out. Use what's around and set goals for the next step. Think creatively to solve problems, treat those around you with respect, and keep your word along the way. You never know what doors could open up next for you.

6 **GET OFF YOUR ASS AND JAM.** Don't be afraid to try new things musically. If you hear something in your head, trust your instincts and explore it. Take advantage of making music with other people when you can, folks from all different disciplines. You can learn a lot just by working with people and exchanging ideas; you'll gain a wealth of experience to draw from.

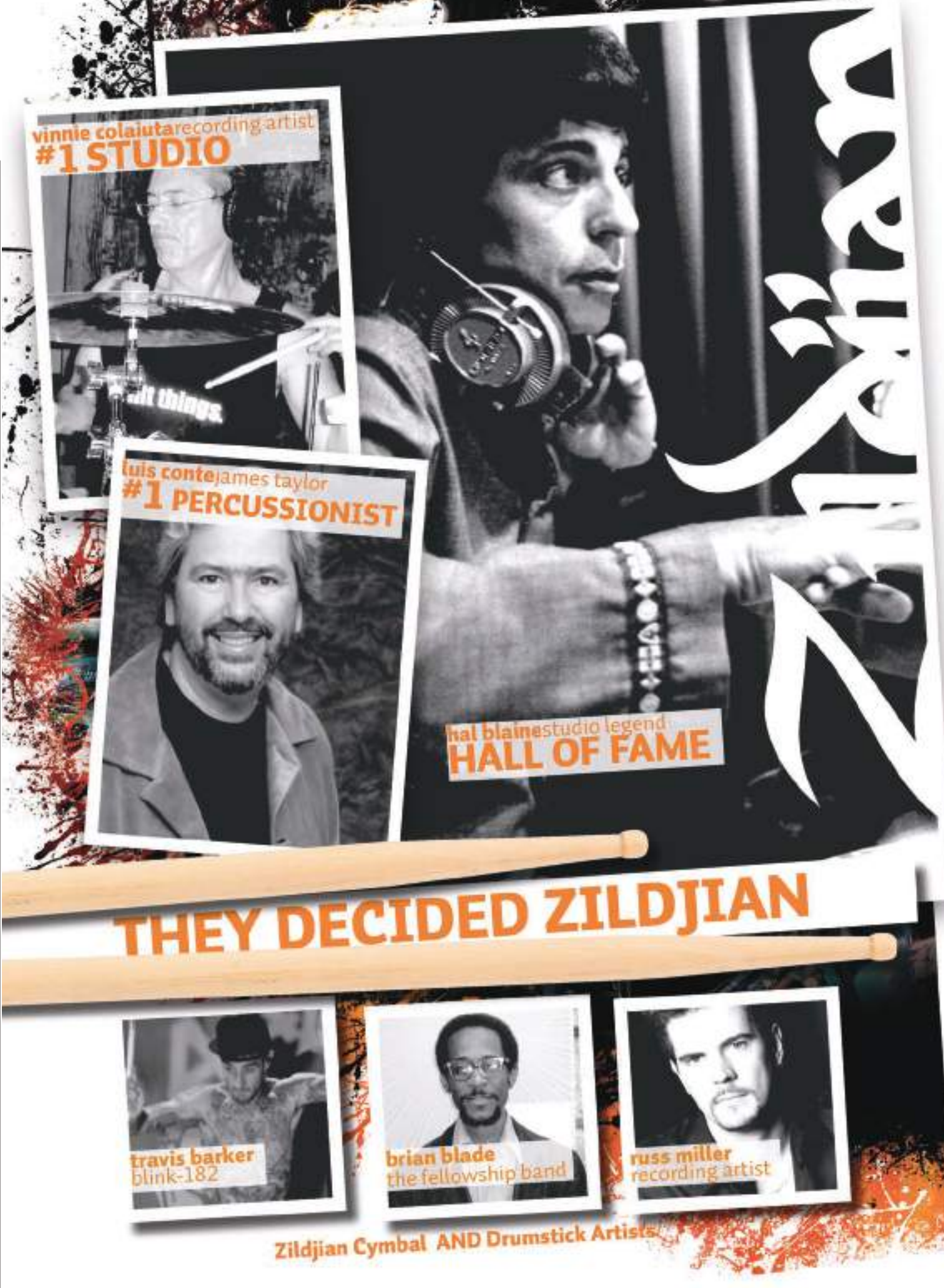
7 **BODY = MACHINE.** The cleaner you keep it and maintain it, the better it's gonna run. The more garbage you pour into it, the faster you'll destroy it. When I play, I want the music to flow through me without anything clouding it or getting in the way. So I stay away from drugs and booze on stage because I don't want anything to dampen that experience.

Lauren Goldberg

8 **TAKE IT STEP BY STEP.** When learning something new, start slowly and build up your endurance and consistency, and let the speed, fluidity, and nuance stem from that. It feels easier to play things faster, but when you slow it down and make every hit deliberate, you gain a much deeper level of control over how you execute what you play.

9 **GROOVE, FROM THE RUDIMENT THROUGH THE GIG.** Feel the pulse in what you play. No matter how simple the pattern, make it musical. It's easy to get bored with practicing sticking exercises or rudiments if all you view them as is clinical movements. Try to make them groove while you practice, or come up with a bass line in your head to go along with them. Put on some James Brown or something with a tight feel and play along, incorporating the exercise into the song.

10 **COMMUNICATE ON STAGE.** Musically and through body language, have fun in the moment while performing, and stay present. The most powerful experiences I have seeing music is when the band expresses as one entity. To really listen to what's going on, to serve the music in that particular moment—that can help draw things out of the musicians on stage and take the music to a new level.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luis contejames taylor
#1 PERCUSSIONIST
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travis barker
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MODERN DRUMMER DIGITALLY ENHANCED

LUDWIG
Epic X-Over Kit

by Anthony Riscica

The new Epic X-Over series from Ludwig is a result of experimentation using multiple wood types within each shell. The company originally explored this concept at its inception a hundred years ago. But the X-Over line differs from the original maple/poplar/maple formula in that these shells feature walnut inner and outer plies, a poplar core, and 3-ply birch reinforcement rings. American walnut is known for its dark color and deep tonality and warmth, due to its loosely compacted grain. The five-piece kit we were sent for review consisted of a 20x22 bass drum, $7^1/_2$x10 and 8x12 rack toms, a 14x16 floor tom, and a $5^1/_2$x14 snare, all in purple fade finish. (The kit shown here is a larger configuration in red burst finish.)

OPEN TOM SOUNDS

The first drum I took out of the box was the $7^1/_2$x10 tom. The finish is a rich lacquer that fades slightly from top to bottom and lets just a bit of the wood grain show through. The drums are outfitted with Ludwig's Mini Classic lugs, and the rack toms feature suspension mounts.

The rack toms were very natural sounding. Their range of tuning was great, and they maintained an open sound even when cranked up. They also held their tone when the heads were very loose. I used the entire kit to record a reference track for a song I was to cut a week later in the studio—and I ended up keeping the reference for the final mix. The song called for a tribal tom-oriented beat (with snares off), and I just couldn't re-create the natural open sound these drums produced in my home studio when I played a different kit in the "real" studio. Like the rack toms, the 16" floor tom had an open sound that seemed to breathe inside the drum before being released. All three toms were very resonant, with warm, dark overtones. They also responded well to softer playing.

PLENTY OF KICK

The 20x22 bass drum on this set is a monster. It's made with the same shell construction as the toms, including the 3-ply birch reinforcement rings. The recessed claws are shaped to conform to the edge of the hoops, but they don't have rubber inserts at the contact point. I played the drum a bit right out of the box. The sound was decent, but I decided to use a towel for some added muffling. With the towel barely touching each head, I felt I had achieved the ideal balance of attack and resonance for this drum. For the most part, I kept the kick tuned medium-low, where it had a nice punch and tons of low end, due in part to its size and the natural tonal quality of the woods used in the shell. The slightly wider reinforcement rings helped keep the drum from sounding too mushy. By letting the heads take on more responsibility for the resonance, the shell works more as a cannon to project the sound.

RESONANT SNARE

The snare on this set was no slouch either. Its resonant, open tone fell right in line with that of the toms. It was warm sounding as well. It's probably not the right choice if you need a snare that really cuts. But in most situations, this drum could carry the load. I had a lot of fun playing it at a jazz trio gig and in rehearsal with a power-pop band, where rimshots had just enough juice to push through. The throw-off is standard, smooth, and classy.

If you're looking to get the most bang for your buck, an Epic X-Over kit could be the one for you. From its looks to its sound, this mid-price series, which has a variety of setup configurations, is well suited to drummers at just about any playing level. Ludwig's goal of constructing hybrid shells has worked out here in a big way.

ludwig-drums.com

Mix-And-Match Shells

Epic X-Over shells feature several types of wood, including walnut inner and outer plies, a poplar core, and 3-ply birch reinforcement rings. This combination is said to provide a balance of low-end rumble—via the walnut and poplar plies—and the definition and focus of birch. Ludwig's goal with this kit is to offer extra-low tones with added power and clarity.

X-Over purple fade finish

ZILDJIAN

K Light Flat, Thin Overhammered, And Bounce Rides

by Michael Dawson

Each year Zildjian introduces new cymbals designed to tickle the fancy of all types of drummers, whether they're beginners or pros, rockers or jazzers. For 2010, the company has added new effects cymbals to its A and K Custom lines, a few funky Trashformer splashes, and budget-minded hats and rides in the ZHT series. We'll take a look at each of those models in a later review. For now let's focus on the three new dark and smoky rides added to the K Light and K Constantinople lines.

20" K LIGHT FLAT RIDE

I've been mesmerized by flat rides since my high school drum teacher let me test-drive his prized Paiste 602, which was the same model that Roy Haynes used on Chick Corea's classic post-bop album *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs*. The skating sound of that cymbal and Haynes's buoyant drumming on that record set the template for how I ultimately wanted to play jazz. When I finally saved up enough cash to get my own flat ride, I settled on a 20" Zildjian K Custom Dark. It had the sizzle and shimmer that I loved in Roy's ride, plus a controlled flange-like sustain, ultra-clear stick articulation, and a dark overall tone. Regrettably, I traded that cymbal for some electronic gear. So needless to say I was very excited to check out the new 20" K Light Flat ride ($566).

The surface of the K Light features subtle nickel-size hammer marks, which create a wavy texture that makes the cymbal a little more flexible. The lathing on the top is fine and tight, while the bottom surface has slightly wider and deeper grooves.

Sonically, the K Light Flat ride was a little darker and more complex than what I recall of my old K Custom Dark. Playing this cymbal elicited a dry stick click for supreme articulation, plus a very pleasing frying-pan-like sizzle that added a bit of excitement to the controlled sustain. This is a cymbal for those who like to skip and dance with the rhythm, rather than drive it home.

22" K CONSTANTINOPLE THIN OVERHAMMERED RIDE

The 22" Overhammered ride ($868) has a distinct appearance, thanks to dozens of prominent hammer marks on the top and bottom surfaces that were made after the initial stages of hammering and lathing were complete. There are also about a dozen sharp and random notches on the bell that are so deep they cut through the finished surface and reveal the raw bronze underneath. This cymbal is very thin and has a fairly flat profile, with the wide bell gradually elevating from the bow, rather than jutting up abruptly to a clearly defined cup. Zildjian describes the Overhammered as having a slightly drier sound than regular Constantinoples.

This ride had a sweet and breathy sound, with a low pitch, a long and dark sustain, and even overtones. The bell sound was throaty and subtle (not chimey), and playing on the bell evoked a lot of wash. I really liked this sound for that Elvin Jones *Love Supreme*–style mambo groove. In fact, this cymbal is one of the closest I've heard to capturing the overall vibe of Elvin's ride sound. It's a perfect choice for stretching out during long passages behind horn solos, as the rumbling overtones build quickly but remain just beneath the click of the stick. Adding a few rivets would boost this model's burn factor even more.

Make It Like Mel's

The 22" K Constantinople Bounce ride came about when modern jazz great Kenny Washington contacted Zildjian to see if the company could re-create an old K ride the drummer had been using since he'd inherited it from big-band legend Mel Lewis in 1978. Zildjian's head cymbal designer, Paul Francis, took on the project, scoping out the original model's bell shape, bow curvature, lathing, hammering patterns, and weight before developing a series of prototypes that eventually spawned the final design reviewed here.

22" K CONSTANTINOPLE BOUNCE RIDE

Kenny Washington is a very discerning musician, so when we heard that he'd helped design the 22" Constantinople Bounce ride ($868), we knew we were in for something special. The basic design of this cymbal is based on the specs of an old K of Kenny's that had recently developed a crack around the bell. Everything about the original, including its weight, its narrow but widely spaced top lathing grooves, and its round, pronounced bell shape, was taken into account. Zildjian even had to create a new cup design made especially for the Bounce ride. After testing several prototypes, Washington felt the cymbal needed more low, droning overtones. So Zildjian borrowed a technique used on its orchestral cymbals and added eight deep, cauliflower-shaped cluster hammer marks on the underside.

My first reaction when playing this unique cymbal was a bit lukewarm. It's not a "pretty"-sounding instrument, as the stick attack was a bit sharper than I expected and the overtones were quite complex. But the more I played the Bounce ride, the more its rich and historic character started to reveal itself. The bell sound is classic Max Roach. Listen to the bebop legend's playful call to arms on "Love Is A Many Splendored Thing," from his album with trumpeter Clifford Brown *At Basin Street*, and you'll hear a similar clear and distinct bell sound.

When I really laid into this cymbal, I got a big, roaring growl, which made me want to push and prod with Art Blakey–like intensity. Yet the clean stick articulation had me channeling the strut and swagger of Philly Joe Jones. It's a pretty tall order to encapsulate such distinct and diverse tones in a single cymbal. But the Bounce ride succeeded in doing just that. I can only imagine what this somewhat raw and edgy instrument will sound like after several years of use, once the bronze has had a chance to settle into a richer and mellower tone.

zildjian.com

VIC FIRTH

by Russ Barbone

New Signature Series Sticks

For the last forty-plus years, Vic Firth, the musician, has made it his priority to continually elevate the status quo for drummers' tools. He has pioneered new concepts and methods for manufacturing that have resulted in Vic Firth, the company, becoming one of the world's finest makers of drumsticks, brushes, mallets, practice pads, and carrying bags.

We were sent a selection of new Signature series sticks to review. I weighed each model on a triple-beam-balance scale and found the sticks in each pair to be within one or two grams of each other. None of the sticks exhibited any signs of warping. I also played them on a hard surface to hear how well they were matched in terms of pitch, and each pair proved to produce the same tone. All Vic Firth Signature series sticks list for $16.

CINDY BLACKMAN

At 55 grams per stick, the Cindy Blackman model has the typical weight for a player who can do double duty in rock and jazz circles. The 5A-style shaft is 16" long and has an enlarged neck. The full taper is very gradual, and the tip is semi-pointed with an acorn shape. The tip gives excellent stick definition on cymbals, depending on the angle of the stroke. If you keep the butt end lower, the tip offers a wider, more tonal response. Angling it up so the point contacts the cymbal produces a more defined, pingy response.

AHMIR THOMPSON

The white-finish Ahmir Thompson model weighs 49 grams, is 17" long and .52" in diameter, and features Vic Firth's anti-slip black Vic Grip. It's a great solution for drummers who play for extended periods of time and who are susceptible to dropping sticks due to sweating. This model is quite long and thin, so it's best suited to softer playing styles.

MARKY RAMONE

Punk great Markey Ramone's stick weighs 56 grams and is $16\frac{3}{8}$" long. Its diameter is between that of a 5A and a 5B, and it has a short taper and a big barrel-style tip. This is just what you'd expect from a drummer who has to cut through stacks of amplifiers. This is a *loud* stick.

TOMMY IGOE

The Tommy Igoe model weighs 49 grams and is $16\frac{1}{8}$" long with an extended taper. It has a lot of power and feels great. It would be equally at home in rock, fusion, and big-band settings. The stick's pointed tip provides enhanced cymbal articulation.

CHRISTOPH SCHNEIDER

Rammstein drummer Christoph Schneider's model is the heaviest of the bunch, weighing 64 grams. This white-finish stick is $16\frac{1}{4}$" long and has a short taper and a teardrop tip. Like Marky Ramone's model, it's a loud stick for players who need to be heard. It could also be good for marching applications or for chops-building practice routines.

AARON SPEARS

R&B/pop drummer Aaron Spears designed a unique-looking stick that weighs 54 grams and has a long, smooth taper and a bulbous rounded tip. The seamless neck and tip design offers quick rebound, especially on cymbals.

vicfirth.com

Computer Matched For Perfection

Vic Firth Signature series sticks are made under specific guidelines laid down by some of today's top artists. All models in the line are cut from American hickory, kiln dried, and then computer matched for weight tolerance and tone pairing.

MAPEX
Black Panther Series Snare Drums

by John Emrich

Cherry Bomb

Velvetone

Sledgehammer

Mapex has added fourteen new Black Panther snares to its lineup for 2010. We had the opportunity to play all of these drums, and each offered its own unique sound. For the purpose of this review, we chose the six that we felt were the most distinctive. Let's take a look.

CHERRY BOMB

The Cherry Bomb ($439.99) has a $5^1/_2$x13 cherry shell. Its finish is beautiful and has an almost wet look, and its sound is ideal for a main snare. It had a wide tuning range, but I really liked the way it spoke when tuned medium tight. The snares were very responsive. This drum had a versatile sound that would work in a wide range of musical styles.

VELVETONE

The $5^1/_2$x14 Velvetone ($579) is made of a combination of walnut, maple, and burl maple. The finish is a good-looking vintage burst. This drum's tone was warm yet powerful, with a smooth quality and a wide snare sound. I used the Velvetone in a jazz setting, and it blended well with my vintage Gretsch drums. This would be an ideal candidate for players who have the budget for only one snare.

SLEDGEHAMMER

The Sledgehammer ($589) is a $6^1/_2$x14 hammered brass drum that really cuts. Its hardware, including the tube-style lugs, is finished with an antique brass look. In addition to producing a very sharp attack, the drum had a lot of body. This characteristic is typical of most brass drums, but I was able to get a bit more body in the higher dynamic range from this model, where other brass snares might start to choke. Tuning the drum to a medium tension yielded a massive crack with a lot of low-end tone. This snare will make guitar players reach to crank their volume knob.

PHANTOM

The Phantom ($439) is an ear-popping 5x12 snare with chrome hardware and tube-style lugs. At first I was happy with the high pitch that it produced naturally. When I lowered the head tension I was rewarded with a tone that would work as a main snare sound for a dry and articulate Gavin Harrison–type vibe. Even though the Phantom is a small drum, I tried playing it with brushes and was happy with the results. I had to restrict my movements, but I found a tone quality that worked great with wire brushes.

This drum also offers a lot of control. For that reason, it could prove very effective in the studio as a main or auxiliary snare. When I placed the Phantom on the left side of my hi-hat, I cranked up the head tension until the drum produced an excellent timbale-style tone.

RETROSONIC

The Retrosonic ($729) is a $5^1/_2$x14 walnut drum with a natural walnut finish and tube-style lugs. It had an open sound quality that was reminiscent of many vintage drums I've played. Walnut is a hard wood, and this drum had an almost metal-sounding ring to it. I found the Retrosonic to be a great general-purpose snare, and it worked well at a wide variety of head tensions. As I tightened up the coated Ambassador batter, the pitch went up without choking the resonance of the shell. The articulation was outstanding, even at whisper-quiet dynamic levels.

WRAPPING UP

The majority of these new Black Panther snare drums will be sold for under $400, which is a great price point for drummers looking to expand their collections. If you can't wait for the drums to hit the stores, visit Mapex's Web site and listen to audio examples of each one.

mapexdrums.com

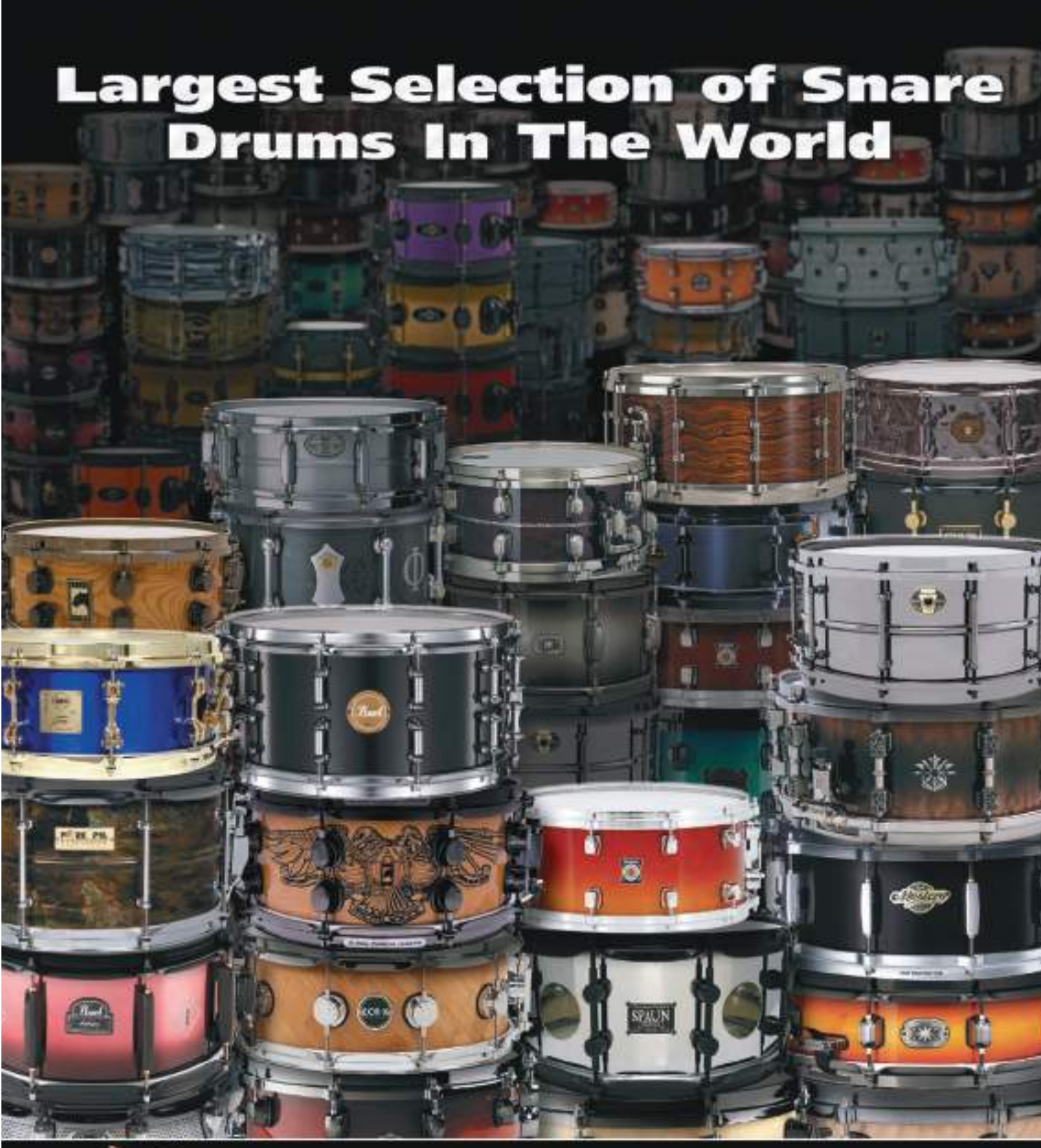
Phat Bob

The Phat Bob ($649) looks to be a loud and aggressive drum because of its 7x14 maple shell with black hardware. But it has rounded bearing edges, so its sound is closer to that of vintage snares. When I added a little muffling to the top head and tightened up the tension, I was thrilled with the combination of deep tone and excellent stick response. At a variety of head tensions I was still able to get plenty of articulation and snare response. This drum recorded well and sounded great for rock ballads and old-school grooves.

Phantom

Retrosonic

Largest Selection of Snare Drums In The World



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ALTERNATE MODE

trapKAT XL

by John Emrich

Alternate Mode has been at the forefront of electronic drum controllers for years. The company has been responsible for cool electronic pad instruments, such as the drumKAT and the malletKAT, that have enabled drummers to incorporate electronic sounds into their performances. One of Alternate Mode's more recent products, the trapKAT, has gone through a major overhaul and has emerged as the trapKAT XL.

The trapKAT has become a very popular controller. While it doesn't have a conventional drumset layout, the instrument has nonetheless drawn many admirers because of its performance level and the amount of control it offers. There are no onboard sounds, but the trapKAT has twenty-four pads and allows for bass drum and hi-hat pedal connections. The instrument's unique layout can inspire you to play differently, which can lead to some very creative results. I've used the trapKAT as a controller for software through a Muse Receptor 2 and found it to be very easy to set up and program. Now let's take a look at the major upgrades in the trapKAT XL.

OLD VERSUS NEW

The older version of the trapKAT weighs thirty-five pounds. The trapKAT XL weighs fourteen pounds and is very easy to move around, thanks in part to the custom gig bag that's available as an accessory. The size of the instrument has also shrunk a little, to 40x17$^{1}/_{2}$x2$^{3}/_{4}$. This reduction in weight and size will be very important to anyone who does a lot of traveling.

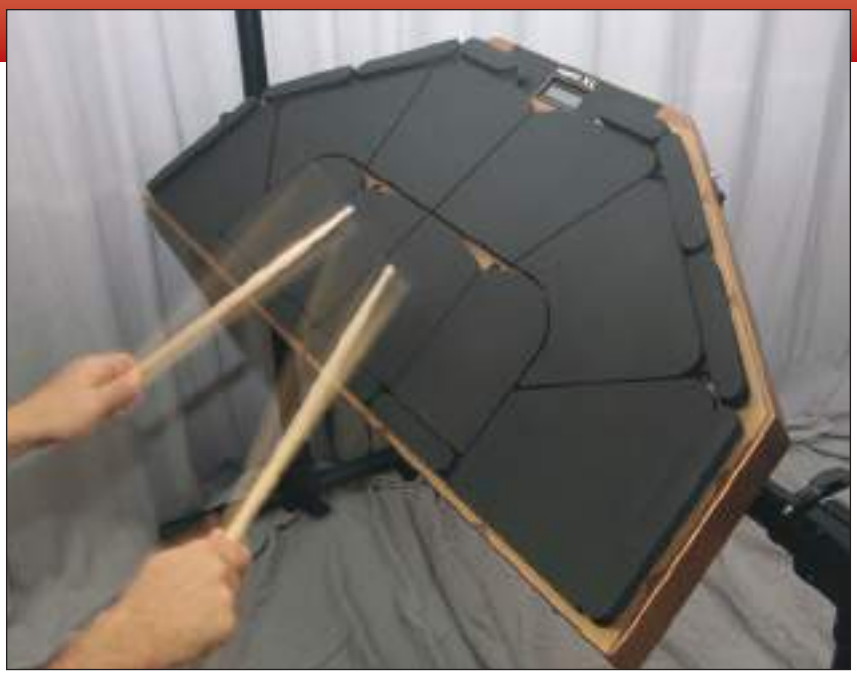
The trapKAT XL uses a new pad material. By comparison, these are a lot softer than the older pads, and they're very easy on the hands. The new material feels like what's used on the malletKAT, which could take a little while to get used to if you're accustomed to the harder pads of the drumKAT or the original trapKAT. The XL's pads have a little more bounce to them, with a response that falls somewhere between that of a hard rubber pad and the springiness of mesh. After playing for about five minutes, I was completely comfortable with the difference in response and was rewarded with a very even velocity range.

The trapKAT XL has upgraded FSR sensors to go along with the increased thickness of the rubber pads. This combination makes for a very musical and dynamic triggering response. The real power of the trapKAT XL, though, lies in the 4.0 chip features. Using this instrument to trigger software is a breeze. Each pad on the XL can be trained for individual response. The end result is a very even response and a smooth dynamic range from the softest note all the way up to full strikes.

The trapKAT XL can be tailored to fit any player's individual playing style. The dynamic range can be set up easily, with controls for velocity curve and threshold. This is very important to those of us who use VST software for our sounds. By being able to dial back the velocity response and top range, I was able to get a machine-gun-free performance from all of my software instruments. Additionally, the updated 4.0 software in the XL features advanced hi-hat capability to work with more of today's hi-hat controller pedals, including those from Roland, Hart, Pintech, and Yamaha. All of these upgrades are wrapped up in a nice new bronze textured finish.

Perfect For The Apartment

The trapKAT XL is one of the quietest electronic instruments you'll ever play. If you live in an apartment complex, that's a big deal. One thing worth pointing out is that you should use only fresh, unscarred drumsticks with this instrument. The new pad material is soft and could be snagged and damaged by beat-up sticks.



SIZE AND FUNCTION

The trapKAT XL has other cool functions that can be used to enhance solo performances. For one, you can link pads together to trigger chords. You can also set up each pad to alternate between up to sixteen different MIDI notes. Think of the performance styles of Akira Jimbo and Tony Verderosa—the way these two guys are able to play melodies with electronic pads comes from a similar type of alternating function. You simply line up the MIDI notes in the order that you want them to sound with each stick hit.

Another convenient function deals with continuous controller (CC) information. Continuous controller data can be assigned to a wide variety of functions, including volume, pitch, effects, and so on. If the sound module or software you're using reacts to MIDI CC data, the trapKAT XL can control it from the pads. Combine that with the MIDI clock function, and you can literally start and stop sequences and loops while controlling CC data at the same time. And all while playing drum parts!

The small size of the XL makes it easy to fit on small stages. It's also a great studio tool with a very small footprint. I used the trapKAT XL, along with BFD2 software, to record drum parts from my house in Maryland for a hard rock album for a friend who lives in Nashville. He asked me about the drumset I used for the recording and was shocked to find out it was trapKAT XL triggering software. The accuracy of the pads resulted in very smooth recorded VST drum parts with little need for editing. What makes this even better is that the entire system I used to record those tracks could easily fit in a small corner of my studio, making for a very attractive option for anyone with space issues.

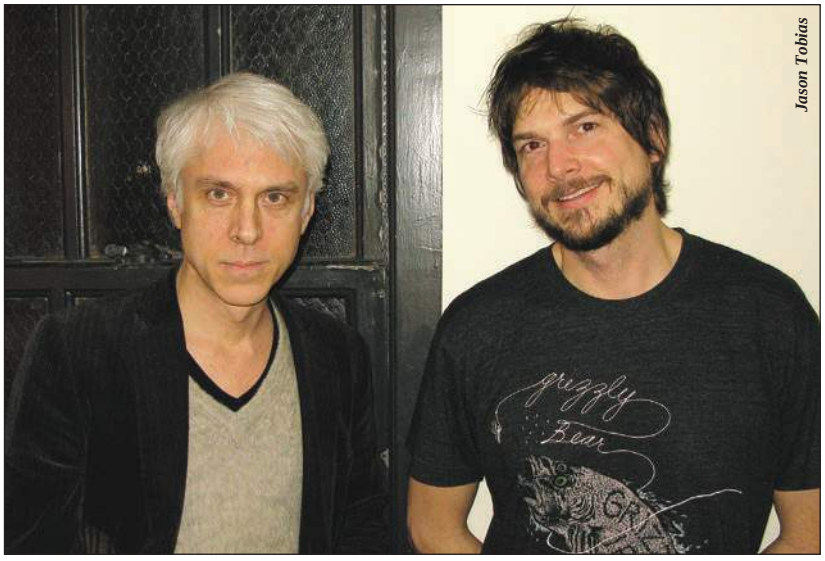
CHECK IT OUT

I recommend the new trapKAT XL to players looking for a large quantity of pads with a small footprint and the best response available from a multi-pad instrument. Again, there are no sounds in the unit, but the levels of control and flexibility make up for that. The trapKAT XL is available directly from Alternate Mode's Web site for $1,799.

alternatemode.com

R.E.M.'S BILL RIEFLIN

GLENN KOTCHE OF WILCO



Jason Tobias

Each has put to use hard-earned chops and fierce open-mindedness in the service of some of modern music's most idiosyncratic artists. **Two natural ponderers consider the big picture—and examine the tiny details.**

As a classically trained percussionist with a rock 'n' roll heart and a head for exotic sounds, Glenn Kotche has established himself as one of the most exploratory, sensitive, and emotional drummers to emerge in the past decade. From his well-considered yet in-the-moment drumming with Wilco to his kaleidoscopic explorations into sound and feel on his own solo albums, Kotche can always be relied on to make you feel *and* think.

Bill Rieflin has also enjoyed a career where he engages his fringe-dweller disposition and his highly developed professional approach in equal measure, inventively rocking the bejesus out of Swans and Ministry, firmly holding a long and twisting leash with Robert Fripp, and expertly getting to the essence of the timeless songs of Robyn Hitchcock and R.E.M.

With musicians as intriguing and candid as these two gentlemen, you need only push "record" and let them have at it. Which is exactly what we did…

GLENN ASKS BILL

Glenn: After years of playing, you recently decided to change your grip from matched to traditional. In my own experience, I've noticed that by being comfortable with both grips, I have more options, particularly when it comes to feel.

Bill: There are two main reasons for this. The first has to do with feel. Most of my favorite drummers learned using traditional grip and still use it today. I wanted to see if some of that good feel would rub off. Instead, I found that I couldn't really play anymore. But I noticed a lot of interesting things while not playing very well.

The second reason was to break old habits. The sneaky thing about habits is that they quickly become invisible and we forget all about them. They're so interwoven into how we do things that it becomes almost impossible to distinguish "them" from "us" and their effect upon our playing. Not to overstate it, but for me, habit is a fundamental point. Because we play by habit, it's essential to develop good habits from the get-go. Unfortunately, I have some rather ingrained and tenacious bad habits. Sometimes it's easier to develop a new habit than to redirect a well-worn one. So working with trad grip is a way I can short-circuit old habits.

Glenn: We're both in a unique position in that we joined bands that were already established. We each had a back catalog to learn. I studied [original Wilco drummer] Ken Coomer's parts and feel in an attempt to do justice to the back catalog, but as a result it really broadened my playing. What was it like learning R.E.M.'s catalog?

Bill: My aim was for R.E.M. to sound like R.E.M. I wanted to be true to the

"SOMETIMES WE RECORD COMPLETELY LIVE—AND THE TAKE WITH THE BEST VOCAL PERFORMANCE WILL ALWAYS WIN OUT OVER THE BEST DRUM PERFORMANCE. SO I'D BETTER BE 'ON' FOR EVERY TAKE."
—GLENN KOTCHE

ROCK
Todd Sucherman

METAL
#1 James 'The Rev' Sullivan
Tomas Haake

PROG
Mike Portnoy
James 'The Rev' Sullivan
Neil Peart

R&B
Zoro
Chris 'Daddy' Dave

FUSION
#1 Morgan Ågren
Dave Weckl
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#1 Rich Redmond
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James 'The Rev' Sullivan – Avenged Sevenfold: *Live in the LBC*

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spirit and the letter, for each song. This meant learning both the notes and the feel. I was largely unfamiliar with the details of their catalog, so I had a lot of catching up. I made charts for everything. The notes are easy enough, but getting the feel was another matter. I was committed to knowing what made [original R.E.M. drummer] Bill Berry tick, to knowing how and why he played what he played, to absorb him through osmosis. I had about three months and listened to the records constantly.

I would listen until I noticed something. Anything. Eventually I'd notice something else. Soon, patterns emerged. A big challenge for me was pulling back when and where it was needed; I was still used to playing pretty full-on most of the time. "Maps And Legends" was the first song where I felt I'd achieved something. I still always enjoy playing that song.

Learning the old R.E.M. material opened up my approach and my thinking about feel. The analogy is something like character acting. It has to do with embodying the spirit of someone else; I wanted to embody Bill's spirit. As time went on and I got more comfortable and confident, I put more of myself into the songs. Now the older material is pretty much a hybrid of the two Bills.

Glenn: I had a conversation recently about drummers who play for the song versus drummers who play for the artist. Some drummers are successful because they always put the artist first, meaning they put them in their comfort zone—that place where they really feel the music and are able to best convey and perform it. Other drummers excel in being able to serve the song and breathe life and freshness into it—to make it come alive every time it's played. The greats are often able to do both. But in many players the two can be mutually exclusive.

> "EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE I LIKE TO GIVE MY BANDMATES A RUN FOR THEIR MONEY. IT GIVES THE PERFORMANCE A LITTLE KICK, AND IT SATISFIES MY MISCHIEVOUS TENDENCIES." **—BILL RIEFLIN**

In a live setting, do you ever grapple with the dilemma of trying to keep things comfortable for everyone and consistent from night to night, as opposed to trying to make it continually exciting and raising the bar every night?

Bill: With R.E.M., I've tried a few approaches. The group dynamic is very fluid, so I'm always on my toes. But I generally play to support the singer; I want to make sure Michael [Stipe] gets what he needs so that he's completely comfortable and secure. He seems to prefer reliability, so I go for consistency, including with tempos.

My natural inclination is to be more free and unpredictable than that. I always figured that was one of the benefits of playing drums. Just ask the Minus 5. I'm not saying they're a free-for-all, but every once in a while I like to give my bandmates a run for their money. It gives the performance a little kick, and it satisfies my mischievous tendencies. Working with Robyn Hitchcock is somewhere in between. Although I play it pretty straight, things can vary from song to song, night to night. One night it might be appropriate to really go for it; the next night maybe not so much. If I know Robyn's having a hard night, I'm going to play differently than if he's levitating.

Above all, I play for the music. What this means can change from moment to moment. So, as in all cases, it's important to pay attention.

Glenn: How much would you emphasize versatility to a young drummer? Would you recommend for someone to focus their energy into learning a wide variety of styles? Or would you recommend that they follow the music they're most passionate about and try to find their own voice in that style?

Bill: To a young drummer I would first emphasize having a solid foundation in drumming fundamentals, and then I'd emphasize having good physical tech-

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nique. This last one is essential, in my view, and it's the trickier of the two. Good technique comes from understanding the use of the body. Learning to play any instrument is really a matter of learning to direct the body in a specific and intentional way. There are lots of ways to do things, but some ways are more efficient than others. Good technique allows us to be the player we wish to be—with energy to spare. Some ingenious players can go far with bad technique, but the wall always comes.

Some people want to be good enough to be able to play anything. Others want to develop their own voice. Some don't care about any of this and just want to have some fun. My advice is to come to a good understanding of what about playing is most important. Once you know this, then you can pursue it more directly.

Glenn: I'm curious as to how you deal with self-criticism. I've noticed that most great musicians are their own worst critics. This is a positive aspect in one respect because it means their expectations are high. It implies that there is an intention of growing and improving. This same quality can also be debilitating if it hurts your confidence or self-worth as a musician. How do you balance your self-criticism so it's productive instead of being destructive?

Bill: My approach to this is to cultivate a realistic and accurate sense of what my playing is really like—to know what I can and can't do, and what I might be able to do. For me, the way in is through listening. Listening is active—it requires attention. Through listening I can better know what's really going on.

Glenn: I'm wondering how you feel about the concept of riding. I know that in the past you've gone out of your way to avoid cymbals in order to break habits. Ever since I got to double drum with Maureen Tucker—the drummer for the Velvet Underground—I've been hyperaware of the abuse of cymbals by many drummers. They're sometimes used as a crutch or almost as a habitual tick of sorts. But I'm still obsessed with how the idea of riding got to be such an integral part of rock music. How do you reconcile the now standard tradition of riding in rock music with a desire to free up this practice?

Bill: This is an interesting question, and I'm glad you asked it. For me, it has to do with the use of conventions and clichés, and their functions. Interestingly, the first time I heard "Wilco" [the song] I noticed that you go to the ride in the middle eight. The reason I noticed it was precisely because it follows traditional genre form—it's the place in the song where one would go to the ride. I thought it was interesting that you made this choice.

Glenn: That was a conscious decision on my part. Since I'm riding on the floor tom throughout the song, I add jingles [attached to the hi-hat] to give a change of color in the instrumental sections before the verses. This is actually where I would typically go to the ride. That's why going to the ride in the bridge provided the greatest contrast in dynamics and color from the rest of the song. And that's why I chose to do it. Oddly enough, I like to go to the floor tom for the bridge as a first instinct, so this song is actually completely backwards from my usual conventions.

Bill: I think these kinds of conventions have their origins in meaning, in the sense that they are meant to communicate something about the music. They aren't arbitrary. These conventions become clichés when the meaning is replaced by habit and empty adherence to genre form. Rock music is genre music, and it has more than its share of conventions and clichés. But rock is also a point of view; it's a spirit, a way of doing something. That in itself sounds a bit cliché, but form without spirit lies lifeless.

Glenn: I may not be able to play at the very top of my abilities all the time, but I'm usually able to play at the top of my game in high-pressure situations. I'm referring to everything from a crowded recording session with lots of folks that I hold in high regard hanging out, or live television like *Saturday Night Live*, or even playing major festivals or shows—something R.E.M. does at the extreme, playing to tens of thousands of people. These situations call upon a set

of skills that most drummers are never taught—skills that are far more mental than physical. I attribute some of my luck thus far to my experience in the Cavaliers Drum & Bugle Corps, where pressure and music are inextricably intertwined. Is there any sort of psychological practice or preparation that you do before entering these situations?
Bill: Until only recently I would still have some degree of nerves before a show. This varied from situation to situation. I think some of it had to do with the mistaken belief that unless I was revved up for the show in a certain way, the performance would be boring, complacent, and lazy. I like intensity.

Nervousness can amp you up, but it can also derail you. It interferes with the performer's relationship with the body, with the performer's ability to play. There are many reasons for nervousness, but fear is probably number one. I put lack of confidence in this category.

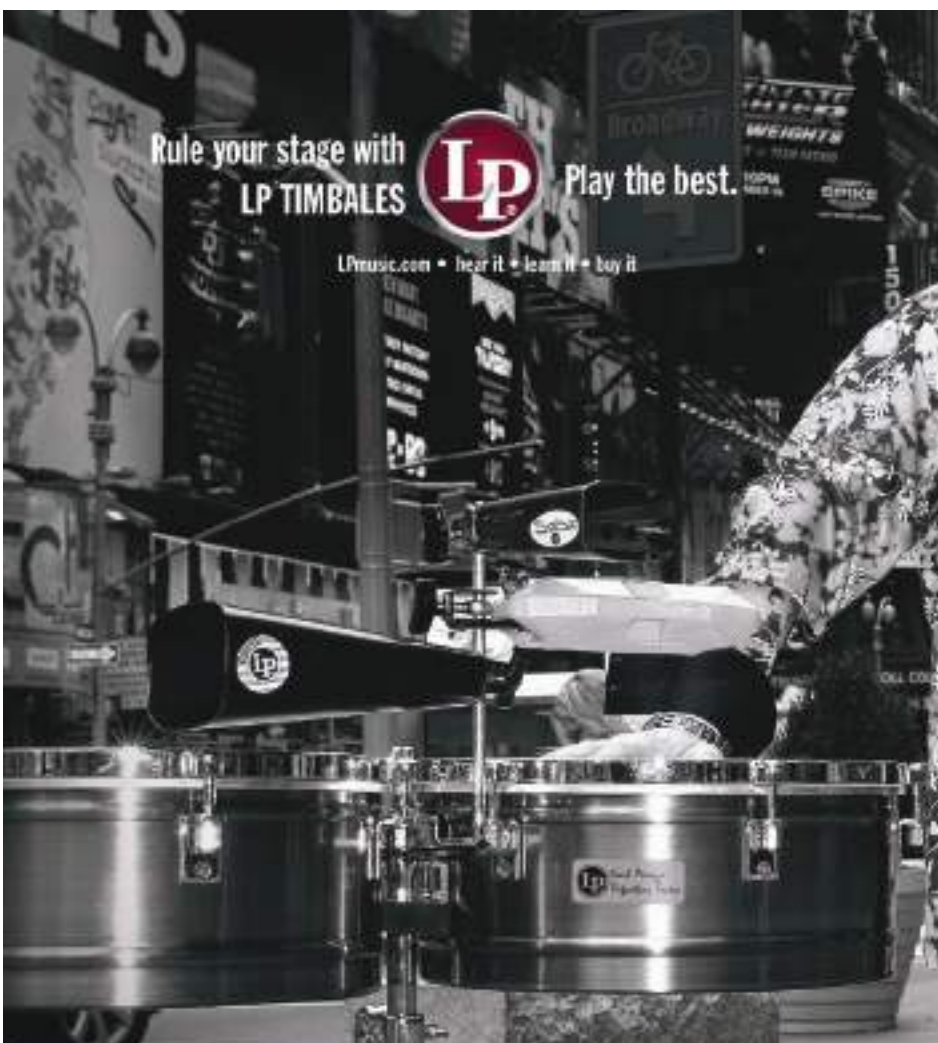
I warm up on a practice pad before a gig. This gets the hands active and coordinated. I've recently been incorporating the feet, using a pedal with a kick drum practice pad. I devise patterns that use all four limbs in ways that aren't automatic. This gets my mind ticking.

BILL ASKS GLENN

Bill: I've been thinking a lot about how one gets better as a player. For me, it seems to have to do with examining and refining technique more than just "pushing through." For instance, if I want to play faster I can never get there by just going faster. I always seem to have to acquire a new technique or change something about how I do things. How do you approach making improvements in your playing?
Glenn: I do it the exact way that I used to preach to students. I start very slowly, trying things in simple combinations—one limb at a time, then combinations of two limbs, three, etc.—and paying attention to every detail. By going slow, I can better notice the nuances that would otherwise be too numerous or subtle to catch if my mind was trying to keep up with my body—just pushing through something. It's just using careful self-observation and repetition.

Bill: How would you describe your feel?
Glenn: When I was younger I think I had more of an energetic "on top" feel. I then spent time trying to develop a deeper, almost behind-the-beat type of feel. The last few years I've really delved into incorporating more buoyancy within my feel. That came from listening to and studying an older generation of rock and soul drummers—guys who grew up listening to and playing jazz and swing and old R&B, basically triplet-based music. These drummers of the first generation of rock and soul had an incredible swing to their playing, even if they were playing even 8th notes. I spent a lot of time trying to absorb that buoyancy, for lack of a better term. I now feel that type of playing comes naturally—hopefully regardless of where I'm playing in relation to the beat.
Bill: When you listen to recordings that you play on, what do you hear?
Glenn: Well, unfortunately, I hear any mistakes or things that I could have done better. That's not always the case—but more often than not. Especially the way that Wilco records, where takes of songs are chosen for that "special something" instead of accuracy or perfection. We do very little editing and comping for this day and age—and the music is better for it ultimately. There's no question about that.

Sometimes we even record completely live in the same space, without separation. So the drums bleed into the vocals and everything else too. When that's the case, there is no option of fixing things—and the take with the best vocal performance will always win out over the best drum performance! So basically I'd better be "on" for every take.
Bill: How do you view your playing?
Glenn: In a larger sense I view my playing as a continuation of a long history of a multiple or total percussion approach to drumset. I think I've been able to incorporate my background in classical and freely improvised percussion into my kit playing. Being a musical drummer was drilled into my head for years by my band directors and private teachers, so I think that's always a



focus for me.

Bill: How would you describe the course of your development as a drummer, in terms of interests and intention?

Glenn: On drumset, I started as a rock drummer wanting to play a million notes, and then I was exposed to a lot of different types of music. My playing then took on a greater appreciation for economy and feel. My view was also greatly broadened by playing in hugely disparate musical situations. I realized that incorporating what I'd learned in all of these settings was a huge asset for my drumset playing, regardless of the style.

My intentions have increasingly been to explore new possibilities for the drumset beyond that of timekeeper in groove-based music. That's why I started doing a lot of solo drumset performances. I'm most interested in exploring the textural, melodic, rhythmic, and compositional possibilities of the kit.

Bill: I know that every once in a while, interest and excitement levels don't peak on tour. What do you do when you find that you're losing interest in playing a song or you find that you're generally distracted and thinking about something else during a gig?

Glenn: Honestly, I usually don't have too much of a problem with this. However, if I do find myself having a dip in energy I usually mix things up a bit—throw in a left-field fill or a little spice somehow, nothing that derails the music, but something subtle that my bandmates will notice. I usually get a reaction from my bandmates and we start to interact a little more and play off each other a bit more intensely. Energy on stage is contagious.

Bill: How would you describe your attitude about tightness, either in your own playing or in the overall sound of the band? The playing on *Wilco (The Album)* is really solid. Is tightness a part of the group conversation?

Glenn: Tightness is not part of the conversation. I'd say feel is the priority. In Wilco, as long as we're locking into the best feel for the song and the best bed for the lyrical phrasing, everyone is happy. Just by the sheer number of shows that we play, we've learned each other's tendencies. The result is we play together. So for us, conveying the spirit of the music is the main point—not accuracy.

Bill: Tell me what your practicing is like these days.

Glenn: Unfortunately, almost all of my practicing the past few years has been in the form of preparation. I simply don't have the time to sit down and explore ideas like I want to at this point in my life. Since I play solo drumkit shows, my alone time behind the kit is usually devoted to either writing new pieces or working out new things I've already written. This is my practice. I usually write things just beyond my ability in order to push myself to continue to grow. Basically, now more than ever I practice mentally, just by visualization. I can get a lot of work done re-familiarizing myself with solo material. I'm finding this to be an effective, practical way of practicing.

Bill: In the course of this interview, I commented that I was able to answer one question for every ten of yours, suggesting that this could reflect our differences in style or temperament. For sure, I'm a bit of a ponderer. It can take me a while before I come up with a satisfying part for a song—I'm a bit of a slow worker. What about you?

Glenn: I suppose in general I tend to be a bit more impulsive. This isn't true in all aspects of my personality, but with drumming and coming up with parts, it seems to be the case. I usually get several ideas for parts straight away and then need to consider them and filter ones out that may not serve the music properly. Most of the time that means starting with what I view as the most exciting idea that also seems like it will work for the song. I then play with it—tweaking and changing it until I feel like it really fits.

I'd like to add that I'm almost always receptive about at least entertaining a bandmate's suggestions as well. Sometimes non-drummers can come up with really great drum-part ideas. I think it's important not to be too defensive about that sort of thing.

Marshall
EVANS
SABIAN

CHRIS Pennie

DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN GAVE OUR MAN THE PLATFORM TO REFINE HIS UNIQUELY HEAVY APPROACH. NOW **COHEED AND CAMBRIA** IS FEELING THE POWER OF PENNIE. PROGRESSIVE ROCK DRUMMER JOE BERGAMINI SWITCHES TO DRUM-JOURNALIST MODE AND GETS TO THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF CHRIS'S METHOD.

I learned of Chris Pennie well over ten years ago. My first encounter with him was listening to his playing with the Dillinger Escape Plan, which brought him to the attention of drummers thanks to the band's dizzyingly complex song structures, overlapping polyrhythmic motifs, and absolute heavy insanity. Dillinger, which Chris cofounded, was extreme before *extreme* was even used to define music. When I finally met Pennie, at a drum festival where we both performed, I learned he was the real deal: His clinic was lucid, well organized, and full of interesting information about his application of funk ideas and polyrhythms to Dillinger's music. And he was a super-nice guy!

Fast forward about eight years, and I find myself sitting next to Mark Guiliana (the amazing New Jersey/New York–based jazz drummer—who happens to be a great friend of Chris's) at Madison Square Garden, watching Pennie perform with Coheed And Cambria, opening for Slipknot. Chris's power and energy jump from the drums and easily fill the arena, with such a strong sense of groove that sometimes I find it hard to believe this is the same guy who played in Dillinger.

Pennie is now at the peak of his powers, with a gig with one of the world's most popular rock bands, an appearance at the 2010 Modern Drummer Festival, and a set of drumming chops (both physical and mental) that are world class. But possibly the coolest thing about Chris is that he has built this incredible career for himself using a classic, old-fashioned recipe: hunger, passion, and a massive amount of hard work.

MD: How did you start working with Coheed And Cambria?

Chris: Transitioning to Coheed has been the best thing that has happened to me personally and professionally. It was a very hard road, filled with many obstacles to even get to play with the band live. But everything worked out, and I'm very thankful to be in such great company.

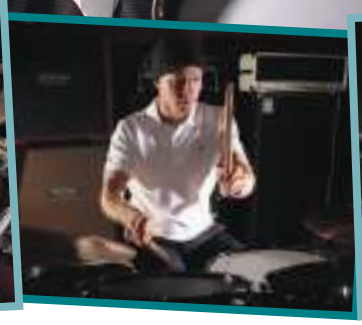
How I got the gig was that Dillinger was opening for Coheed back in 2006. At that moment Coheed was going through some personal problems within the band, and there were personal problems happening with Dillinger as well. About a month after that tour, I received a call from [Coheed guitarist/lead vocalist] Claudio Sanchez, asking if I wanted to come up and jam with them. We talked for a while, and I felt a great personal connection with him immediately.

Now, before he asked me to come and jam, I did a little homework because I had this feeling that he or someone from the band might call. So I'd already learned a bunch of the tunes, which I think really helped me out of the gate.

MD: So basically you went up and jammed, and they said, "Hey, would you like to join the band?"

Chris: It was definitely *not* a simple process. I went up to Middletown [New York] to jam some of the songs, and what was so impressive to me is that everyone

Photos by Rahav



CHRIS'S SETUP

DRUMS: Mapex Saturn series
A. 6½x14 Black Panther Sledgehammer snare
B. 9x10 tom
C. 10x12 tom
D. 12x14 floor tom
E. 14x16 floor tom
F. 20x22 bass drum

CYMBALS: Sabian
1. 14" HHX Groove Hats
2. 19" HHX-Plosion crash
3. 21" HH Raw Bell Dry ride
4. 18" HHX-Plosion crash
5. 19" Paragon China
6. 9" Radia Nano Hi-Hats

HARDWARE: Mapex

HEADS: Evans

STICKS: Vater

came to play. That spoke volumes. I also felt we were all kind of in the same boat emotionally, as far as being confused and not knowing what the future was going to hold—but having hope that we were going to come out on the other side somehow.

I remember feeling crushed after Dillinger opened for Coheed. I don't feel the need to go into details. I still have a tremendous love and respect for the band I cofounded, but what happened I don't wish upon anyone.

So in the winter of 2006 I played my first show with Coheed, and after that the guys asked if I'd want to help write drum parts for the record *No World For Tomorrow*. It was such an interesting time, because we were capturing a pretty transitional period in our lives. And what was terrible about it was that I never was able to get into the studio to record, due to contractual obligations. I have to thank Taylor Hawkins for doing such a great job on the record with so little time. I'm also very thankful that the guys stuck with me and that I was able to finally tour with them in the summer of 2007. The rest has been an unreal ride.

MD: What were the biggest challenges in playing with Coheed after your time with Dillinger?

Chris: I think one of the biggest challenges playing with Coheed is that [bassist] Mike Todd and I are a more traditional rhythm section. I never really had that. I mean, there were moments with Dillinger when that happened, but a lot of it, when we sat down, [guitarist] Ben [Weinman] and I would hammer out the tune and [vocalist] Greg [Puciato] would come in and everyone else would come in and add their part. Coheed was coming to the table with a basic outline of the tune with vocals and guitar parts, and there was a lot of space in there. It's not always jammed to the gills with tons of notes.

A big challenge of leaving Dillinger and coming to Coheed was proving to myself that I could step outside my comfort zone, what I was familiar with and comfortable doing for

RECORDINGS

Dillinger Escape Plan Dillinger Escape Plan, Under The Running Board, Calculating Infinity, Miss Machine /// **Dillinger Escape Plan With Mike Patton** Irony Is A Dead Scene /// **Coheed And Cambria** Year Of The Black Rainbow /// **Return To Earth** Automata /// **Boxer** The Hurt Process /// **Idiot Pilot** Wolves

FAVORITES

Necrophagist Epitaph /// **Peter Gabriel** Up /// **John Williams** War Of The Worlds soundtrack /// **Michael Giacchino** Star Trek soundtrack /// **James Newton Howard** Signs soundtrack /// **Meshuggah** ObZen /// **Jeff Buckley** Sketches For My Sweetheart The Drunk /// **The Flashbulb** Soundtrack To A Vacant Life /// **Björk** Vespertine /// **Fantomas** The Director's Cut

almost ten years. I always want to learn and get better. The unpredictability of what Dillinger is, it's still predictable; it's still one sort of thing that encompasses a lot of styles. But Coheed embraces that too, coming from a completely different place, influence-wise. So for Mike and me it's great because there is that traditional lock-in session where we're kind of feeding off one another.

Also, it's interesting to play in a band where the vocals are just as much a priority as, if not more than, the music at times. When Mike and I aren't locking in, I like to try and phrase the drums to some of Claudio's vocal rhythms.

Another challenge was learning all of Josh Eppard's parts from the previous records, then making them my own. I'm having a blast. Our sets are long; we usually play for over ninety minutes. There are parts in the set where we get to stretch, and there are parts where we're just hammering away. It's great.

MD: Even though people knew you as the drummer with Dillinger, you've said you were a fan of a lot of melodic rock besides the ultra-heavy stuff.

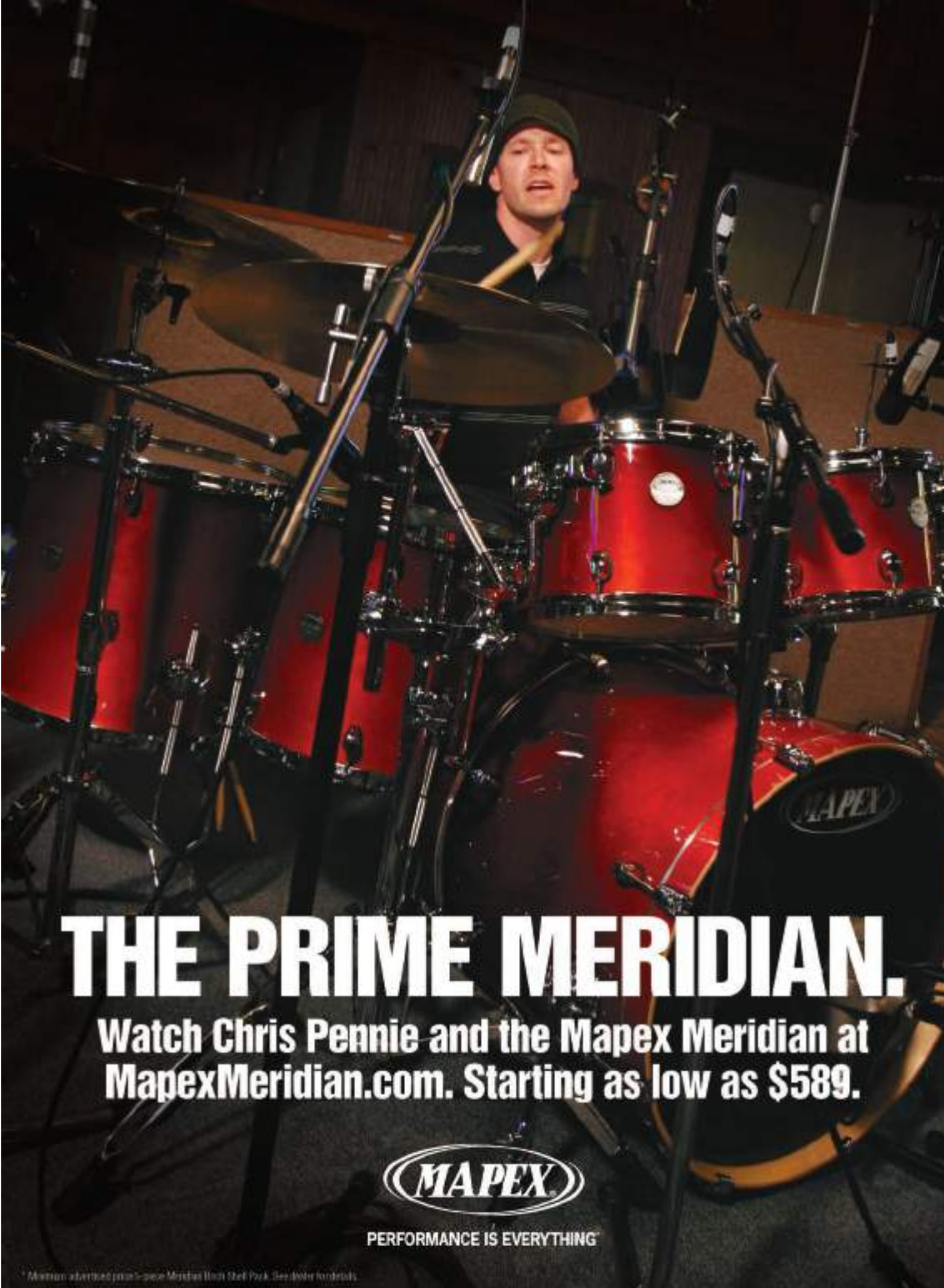
Chris: Absolutely. I grew up listening to everything from Billy Joel to the Beastie Boys, all sorts of stuff. My parents were very avid fans of music. Though neither played an instrument, they would really seek out music, and they had a huge vinyl collection. There was so much to choose from.

The first record I ever got was Iron Maiden's *Maiden Japan*. I was four years old when I got that. So it started early for me. Getting into the rock thing, I was a big fan of Iron Maiden, Def Leppard, and those types of bands. I feel like rock and metal are starting to come back to that. People are starting to sing; the lead vocals are starting to come back again. With one of my new projects, Return To Earth, we're mixing the aggressive stuff with melodic rock.

MD: How did you start to get into the drums? Did you have lessons?

Chris: I heard *…And Justice For All* by Metallica. That was the first record that really got me, when I was about twelve. The drum break in the song "One"—and not only hearing it, but seeing the video—it was just dark and real, and a little scary, and for all I knew at the time the heaviest thing ever. It really struck a chord with me and ultimately made me want to play drums. I got my first kit for Christmas and lessons followed, with a New Jersey teacher named Stu Miller. I went to him for years.

Then I got together with John Fulton and Adam Doll, who eventually were the other half of the original lineup of Dillinger. We used to get together on weekends and just play all the time. Eventually, out of that, we played some original tunes and gigged locally. The bands that we had were very experimental. They started off being metal, but then we went off in a different direction. For me, I really wanted to go out and do things. So I put up an ad in a music store, and Ben Weinman answered it that day. Later I went off to Berklee College Of Music and studied



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MD: In the early stages of Dillinger, I assume you went through listening to Metallica and started getting into the heavier bands of the day.

Chris: Metallica was definitely the gateway to heavier bands like Megadeth and Slayer, and then you had all the death metal bands. For me, one that stood out was Death, with Sean Reinert. He played on one record [*Human*], which came out in 1991, and it pretty much just blew my mind. At that time a lot of guys were just playing a lot of speed. But Reinert had great control, feel, and dynamics and a lot of musicality in his playing. That spoke volumes more than speed, and it still does.

MD: Were you checking out bands from the hardcore movement too?

Chris: That was such a special time in my life. I got back from Berklee, and things started to take shape. The band we had at the time was a hardcore punk kind of thing. So we were into bands like Unbroken, 108, Black Flag, and all the NYC hardcore bands, like Sick Of It All and Snapcase. That music was not of a technical nature; a lot of what was being said was through the lyrics.

MD: When did you start to become aware of jazz and fusion?

Chris: That happened right after I listened to that Death record, around my junior year of high school. On that record, Sean Reinert listed all of his influences, which led me to listen to guys like Vinnie Colaiuta, Dave Weckl, Dennis Chambers, and Steve Gadd. At the same time, I was into artists like Sting.

MD: Your stamp is definitely on the new Coheed record, *Year Of The Black Rainbow*, in terms of the writing. What was the writing and recording process?

Chris: A lot of it starts with Claudio's riffs and vocals. But there were a couple tunes, like "Guns Of Summer," where he wanted to have what the band is known for, while also going off in a different direction. When we were on tour with Linkin Park, we had our own room backstage, so we could set up and play. Claudio and [guitarist] Travis Stever had little rolling Micro Cube amps and I had a Roland kit, so that's how some of the ideas came about. But there were other tunes that were finished and Claudio just wanted me to do my thing. The great thing about it was that he was so loose with it.

The record was done in a lot of sessions, with Atticus Ross and Joe Barresi at Joe's studio, which is in a big warehouse in Pasadena, California. Those guys have a great track record, including Queens Of The Stone Age, Tool, Nine Inch Nails, and Jane's Addiction. It was a real relaxed environment. We all played together in one room as a band. That's huge, because I get a better vibe. I just don't get the energy when I'm sitting there all alone with the engineer saying, "Alright, we're rolling…"

MD: How long did it take to record the album?

Chris: At first we did one tune over a couple days, just to try it out. We were impressed and excited about working with those guys, so we went back out there officially in June 2009, for a month. We returned for another month in November to finish tracking and mixing.

There are a lot of textures on the record, and there are a lot of things that Joe and Atticus wanted to overdub, from every instrument's standpoint. The overall objective for the band was that we wanted to make a dense and dark but dynamic record.

One interesting thing was that we had two kits. For the main kit we used a combination of many different drums: a Pork Pie kit, a Mapex Saturn series kit, and a variety of snares. Atticus has a great knowledge of effects and that sort of thing, and he had this idea for another kit made from a combination of household items like sprinkling cans, paint cans, and garbage cans, and he had the studio tech, Mike Fasano, make them into a drumset.

I also used different brushes, sticks, heavy mallets, and all sorts of different cymbals to get something off the wall sound-wise. Instead of just playing regular 14" hats, we would throw up 16s or these really small metal disks. I would also play along with the track after I was done laying the foundation, and we would make real loops instead of electronic ones.

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MD: I was wondering where the loops came from. You played them in real time and constructed them that way?
Chris: Yeah. It was awesome. The idea was not to grab stock loops from a program like Reason or Kontakt; we wanted to play them to maintain a human feel.
MD: Is that what you did on "Pearl Of The Stars" and "Far"?
Chris: Actually, "Far" was programmed. That was how they wanted to do it. I think that's cool. When you get into the production of a record it can be easy to be married to the drums, because that's the basic role in the band. But I also believe in doing whatever is going to bring the track across.

"Pearl Of The Stars" was different. We used the trash can for a lot of the loops and then set up a lot of toms to get a big orchestral kind of vibe for the ending. That tune really strikes a chord with me; Claudio's lyrics really hit home.
MD: On the song "Guns Of Summer" you're playing some really cool linear-funk-inspired material. Can you describe your approach to that and the influences that led you to play in that style?
Chris: I think I arrived at that by listening to guys like David Garibaldi and going through his book *Future Sounds* and the Gary Chaffee *Patterns* series. My teacher would have me run through a huge chart in the back of the *Patterns* book. It has all sorts of different 16th-note patterns, combinations of three, five, and four, and so on, so it was easy to come up with a groove to the main riff of that song.
MD: Shedding all of the permutations in that book takes a lot of work.
Chris: With Dillinger I would sometimes start by taking those Chaffee patterns and slicing notes out of them, so that I could feel time signatures like 15/8 or 13/8 accurately. It definitely did and still *does* take a lot of time.
MD: You play a groove on the toms on "In The Flame Of Error." How do you come up with creative parts like that?
Chris: "In The Flame Of Error" was one of the riffs that we had jammed on at soundcheck. The verse riff is really busy. So the important thing for me was just to establish the initial feel. It's interesting, because when something's right you can feel it. We played it over and over again until we got inside it. When we really hit it, we just looked at each other, like, "*That's* how it should feel."

Within that verse, there are a couple parts where there's some syncopation happening, and then we get to that double-time part, the second variation of the end of the riff. At the time I was approaching it from that Chaffee *Patterns* frame of mind and was listening to a lot of Thomas Pridgen with the Mars Volta. I really respect his playing.

MD: You're playing in big arenas now. Do you take a different approach?
Chris: I'm fascinated by how things sound—production and that sort of thing—and there's definitely a different approach to playing bigger places. I wouldn't say it's changed my playing, but there are certain things that I simplify, because it's going to sound better. You're just not going to be able to make out every little ghost note.
MD: When I saw you at MSG with Coheed, you didn't have a drum tech. Do you have one now?
Chris: No. I feel like it's all part of the process. I still feel like a kid. I mean, I

have people that help me, like if we have to go do press or signings. But I just enjoy it. I think the coolest thing is sometimes the guys from Evans will be like, "We've got a new head. Take it out on the road and try it out. Let us know how it sounds." I love stuff like that.

MD: What do you do if something breaks during the set and you have no tech?

Chris: To be honest I've never really had that happen. [laughs] I mean, sometimes things fall on the stage, or one time we played this show in Portugal, and the stage cracked in half and I fell off it.

MD: But you've never broken a kick or snare head in the middle of the show?

Chris: Kick heads? No. Snare heads? Yes, I've had that happen. But our tour manager, Joey, is awesome. He'll run right over and help me take care of it.

MD: You're involved with several other projects, including Return To Earth. The new record, *Automata*, sounds great.

Chris: Return To Earth was founded by Brett Aveni, Ron Scalzo, and me. The quick history is that I did a session for Brett and his other band, Getaway Car, and they were getting courted by a lot of major labels. I came in through a friend and did some showcases for them. While all of the transitioning was going on between Dillinger and Coheed, I was also working on songs with Brett and Ronnie for what became Return To Earth. It was all about the love of getting in the room and playing.

It had been a while since I had been in touch with Brett, but we were good friends. We got together in 2006 and wrote a bunch of tunes, worked on them, and had a lot of fun. We recently finished the *Automata* record, which is coming out on Metal Blade this year. We did a lot of the record ourselves. The drums were recorded at my rehearsal spot, with my great friend Kevin Antreassian engineering.

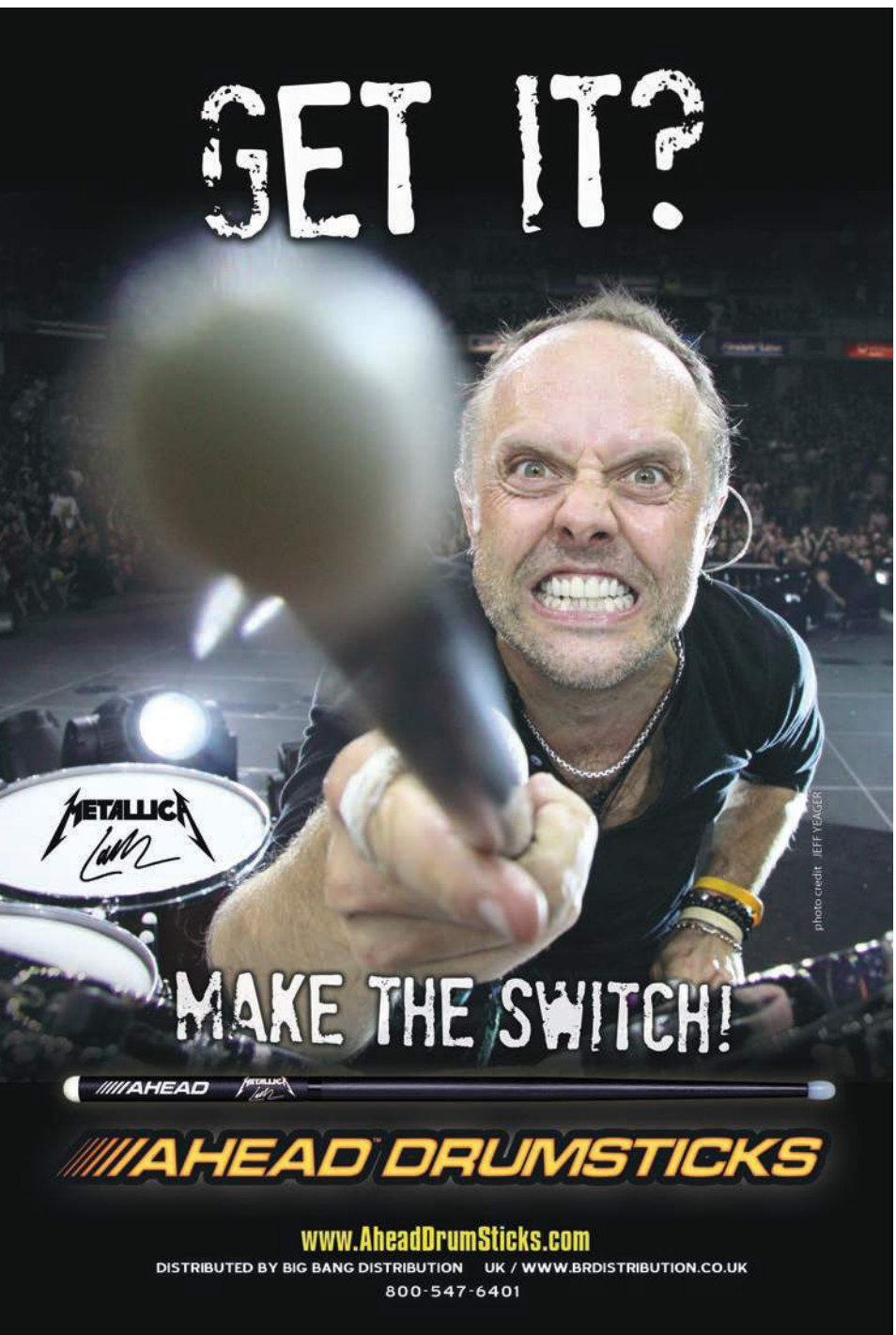
MD: The drum sounds on *Automata* are terrific. Is your rehearsal space a full-blown studio?

Chris: No, we just used the current technology. Brett and I talk about that all the time, but we also talk a lot about music in general. We're avid fans of music. It seems nowadays that bands don't take enough time to really define their sound and find a niche—they're just so quick to get in bands with other kids because they want to go out and play the Warped Tour. That's not the way to go at all, and that's why it's hard to identify the difference between a lot of current bands. The major thing with Return To Earth was that we wanted to sit down and *really* put a lot of care into the music.

MD: Compared with the Coheed stuff, the Return To Earth tracks sound a bit grittier. Was that intentional?

Chris: With *Automata* we definitely focused the mics on specific parts of the kit to bring across a certain vibe in the song. Sometimes we even went straight-up room mics with lots of reverb and that sort of thing. I wanted it to feel big, but natural.

MD: With RTE you use some polyrhythmic and blast-beat-type stuff, reminiscent of what you did with Dillinger. The thing about your heavy playing that makes you different from a lot of guys is that within the crazy hand/foot blast-type stuff you incorporate a lot of dynamics, ghost notes, and accents, which makes it sound more complex. Did you develop that approach from



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studying funk and polyrhythms?

Chris: It was from studying a lot of things. When you're playing a blast beat or any kind of quick passage, there are so many considerations that can be given to the groove, like [thinking in terms of] a funk player or a soloist. I feel a lot of heavy playing nowadays is met with only two considerations, and those are usually *fast* and *loud*. I try to approach it from a musical standpoint, not by making it a musical weightlifting exercise.

With the title track, for instance, I wanted to accent Brett's guitar riff. It's not a crazy syncopation or anything like that, but it's a drum idea that works with the guitar riff, basically using the blast beat concept but going with the riff dynamically and bringing his accents together with mine.

MD: On the Coheed and RTE albums there are moments where you go into the blazing chops stuff, but your playing also sounds very smooth, really mature. Would you say your philosophy or approach has changed since you left Dillinger?

Chris: I think it's always changing, but it's always coming from the same place. Like I said before, there's always so much that I want to say. It's like Coheed is an extension of stepping out of the box of Dillinger, and Return To Earth is like stepping out of the box from both of those things. And now I'm taking on the role of a writer. I started a production company and have been writing orchestral music and soundtrack stuff.

So it has changed. I still love playing that style of chaotic music, but there's also more to say than ramming tons of notes into a two-minute song; there are different ways of saying it.

MD: On "God At The End Of The World" on *Automata*, you're soloing around the band figures. When you do that, are you improvising, or is it planned out?

Chris: It's improvised. When we tracked it I did a couple different takes, like, "Let's just run it and see what happens." It was important to keep it loose. With Dillinger there were a lot of moments where everything was set in stone, just because the music called for it. With Coheed and Return To Earth there were some open-ended moments; I didn't have *everything* planned out. That's exciting to me.

MD: You're known for fast alternating singles between your hand and foot. On *Automata* there are places where you do this and then go immediately into a fast double bass passage. It's really challenging to transition between those two things smoothly. Did you consciously have to work on your balance in order to pull that off?

Chris: Yes. With Dillinger there was a lot of that snare/foot type of thing going on. But I think on some of those songs on the *Automata* record, there's a little bit more double bass, and lately I've been getting into a lot of double kick work. So yeah, I've had to rework a little bit of my balance and my positioning around the kit.

A couple years ago I took a couple of lessons with John Riley, and he was like, "You might want to square up to the kit a little bit more and focus on not being so wide left with your foot on the hi-hat." I even went and worked with my good friend Chris Dillon, who's a trainer. I told him I wanted to improve my stamina for playing long sets and be able to hit harder and be more efficient. We worked a lot with my positioning, working with a medicine ball or whatever, to really square my body. It definitely helped a lot.

MD: How do you tension your pedals?

Chris: They're not jacked up all the way, but they're pretty tight, to where there's a decent amount of rebound. It's the same principle as with heavy sticks; I'm throwing it down, but I'm getting so much top-end weight that it's just bouncing back up. That's why I keep the pedal tension so tight and use a heavy beater.

MD: You also have the band Lion Tamer. That project reminds me of Dillinger. Are you a writing member in that group too?

Chris: Yes. That's basically me and James Love. James played with Dillinger for a while, and he's a phenomenal guitarist. I really enjoy playing that style of music. It's challenging. We formed Lion Tamer a couple years ago and have been working

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on material. It's starting to come together. I feel this music is the next challenge for me in that style of playing.

MD: Like Dillinger, there's a lot of polyrhythmic complexity. How did you get exposed to and interested in polyrhythms?

Chris: My first exposure to that was progressive bands like Dream Theater and Rush, but especially King Crimson, specifically the song "Frame By Frame." Adrian Belew is playing this guitar break in seven, and Robert Fripp comes in and displaces it; it's still in seven, but wow, it sounds like they're creating a natural delay. I was blown away by that. Before Dillinger, some of the guys I played with in high school experimented with that. It just grew from there, with guys like Tony Williams—all sorts of modulations—and progressive bands like Meshuggah; their music is littered with that.

MD: You've been playing very aggressive and technically challenging music since before the terms *extreme metal* and *extreme drumming* were in vogue. How do you feel about the current preoccupation with drumming with speed?

Chris: I have mixed feelings about it, because I think taking anything strictly in one direction is…awful. I think it's a very limited approach. I appreciate guys that can play fast; I think it's a great talent. But I appreciate guys more when they can do that and then back off and just play the groove. Ultimately, to me, too much of one thing is just weird, almost like a cult type of thing. There's *so* much more to drumming than playing fast, and there's more to music than just playing drums.

MD: What advice might you have for younger drummers who want to do what you do in this day and age in the music business?

Chris: Beyond anything else, just have fun. I know that sounds kind of general. But if it's something that you want to pursue, at the end of the day you *have* to enjoy it. There's a lot of work that goes into getting on that stage and playing for an hour and a half. It means not sleeping, doing a lot of press, lugging your drums up three flights of steps…. It means sleeping in a van, or sleeping in a field. If you really want to do it badly enough, then you'll do it.

I think you also really have to be open to change. Because when you're coming up and some sort of success happens to you, you can feel like that's the way it's going to be for the rest of your life. But things don't stay like that forever, because people change and situations change, and people have different things that they want to do.

But if playing music is your endgame, then you just have to figure out a way to get there. There are many ways to do that, but you'll always have to have the hunger, you definitely have to be savvy on the business side, and you must *always* keep your ear open to lots of different styles of music, because doors close a lot. Especially as you get older, if you can keep some of those doors open, then you can consider yourself pretty lucky—because being successful just doesn't happen by accident.

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JASON ALDEAN'S Rich Redmond

CHANNELING AC/DC'S PHIL RUDD, RICH REDMOND DRIVES A TOP-FLIGHT COUNTRY BAND THAT'S ALL ABOUT ROCKING THREE-CHORD RIFFS.

by Steven Douglas Losey

For the past six years, Rich Redmond has been firing up the engines for one of country music's hottest artists, Jason Aldean. Among a recent crop of Nashville groups whose sound owes equal debts to classic country and classic rock, Aldean's music is a decidedly rhythmic experience—wheels churning, pistons pumping, perfectly timed grooves chugging—and Rich Redmond is the engineer.

Redmond has toured and recorded with Aldean since 2004, powering the groove on numerous top-ten singles, including the recent number one "She's Country," as well as one platinum and two gold albums. The drummer, who relocated from Dallas to Nashville thirteen years ago, has also compiled a credit history deeper than a well, recording and performing with artists of the caliber of Miranda Lambert, Doc Walker, Rushlow, and Pam Tillis. And he recently played the CMT show *Crossroads* with Aldean and pop icon Bryan Adams.

Redmond exemplifies the beauty and power of musical drumming. You can immediately tell that he feels the beats at the deepest level. He's thoroughly schooled in all facets of rhythm, and he brings that emotion and those skills to a modern country band currently working at the highest level of performance and popularity.

Jules Follett

"Drummers don't realize how much power they have with their instrument. If a drummer plays with great dynamics, the whole band is forced to do the same thing."

MD: You look like a rock star!

Rich: When I moved to Nashville, the music was taking a turn. It was more souped-up, with piccolo snares, and the drums were getting louder. We were still playing 3/4 and shuffles and waltzes, and everyone still had the hat and the big belt buckle. But I couldn't picture myself as that. The truth is, I always had my own sound and look; it was more of a rock mentality but using a country dialect. Here, fourteen years later, the music caught up with the way I was hearing things, and all of a sudden I started working a lot more.

MD: Are you essentially a rock drummer?

Rich: I've always had an open mind. I wanted to play sessions, and I wanted to go out on the road with a variety of acts. If your range is limited, then you're limiting the artists you can tour with and record with. In the '80s, when I was coming up, I was listening to the Stones and the Faces and Bad Company—that stuff was my default setting.

MD: Live and on record you seem to shift stylistically with little effort.

Rich: Every type of music has its own language, and as someone who has had to survive over the past twenty years, I've really had to learn to speak a lot of different languages extremely well. I've had to be able to pull everything out extremely fast—new country, old country, whatever—while being able to play competently in that style. For me it's just a style of music, and when I hear the song it dictates what I do.

MD: What helps in that process?

Rich: Tuning, the size of the drums and the cymbals, where I place the time, how loose or busy I play, how dense or simple I play…just the whole musical attitude. Today's country music is really '70s and '80s–inspired classic rock. We actually approach a lot of our production like a rock band, but we'll put some slide guitar, banjo, or mandolin in there as well. There are people at Jason's shows from a wide demographic; it's up to me to find something

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STICKS: Pro-Mark autograph 5B American hickory sticks with wood tip and black stick wrap (live only), brushes, Hot Rods, and Cool Rods; Danmar and QwikStix stick holders

MUFFLING: DW Muffling Pillow or household pillow in bass drum, Moongel

ELECTRONICS: On stage, Alesis SR-18 drum machine and Tama Rhythm Watch for click generation, Alesis DM5 sound module (ddrum trigger source), ddrum electronic triggers (used on kick to send an electronic signal to ButtKicker shakers), Ultimate Ears in-ear monitors. In the studio, Apple MacBook running Pro Tools, Reason, Ableton, and Stylus RMX; Akai MPC2000.

CASES: Impact cases, Alcorn Custom Case trunks

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that resonates with all of them.

MD: In actuality, you guys are a tight rock band.

Rich: I ride that tour bus with my best friends 300 nights a year. We call ourselves the 3 Kings. Tully Kennedy plays bass, and Kurt Allison plays guitar. We'll get a call from a label that has a hot new artist they want to showcase. We'll take a brand-new artist that's usually shivering in their boots and make them sound like they're a seasoned pro. We basically bring our knowledge, friendship, and experience on stage to make that artist shine. If you can find the right partners to tackle the ups and downs of life with, you'll probably be a lot happier and have a better chance at being successful.

MD: There's a lot of chemistry in the band.

Rich: We're accountable to each other, we check one another, we have powwows. I don't think there are a lot of bands doing that in this genre. We lean on each other to be the best band out there. Even though there are other great bands, like Keith Urban's, we still want to be the benchmark for what's out there.

MD: What's special about your drumming approach?

Rich: One of my high school band directors told my dad, "Your son will probably be very successful in this business because he knows how to take direction." I took that to heart, I took that all the way to the bank—because I wanted to be somebody who takes direction, plays well with others, and is open-minded. As drummers we choose our spots, but ultimately my job is to make everyone else sound good. You have to have a musical instinct no matter what style you're playing and make appropriate choices and play well

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with others. The guys who really work, the ones who have a thirty- or forty-year career, are the ones who listen and who lift the band up.

MD: You started early on?

Rich: I'm a product of the great music education system in Texas, everything from playing snare drum and all the percussion instruments in fifth-grade band to how to hold the sticks, how to play rudiments, how to read music, how to play more melodic instruments like the xylophone and the timpani. I was a classically trained percussionist. That shifts your mentality. It also led to college and studying percussion and music education at Texas Tech University with Alan Shinn and at the University Of North Texas with Ed Soph, Henry Okstel, and Robert Schietroma. While I was there I played with the One O'Clock Lab Band and a million other ensembles. It was a period of real growth.

MD: Where did you go from there?

Rich: I was playing in fusion bands and wedding bands and playing on jingles and in Top 40 bands with click tracks. The idea was that I always had a goal to be the guy who would be called for anything. I wanted to be able to play some bebop with an 18" kick, go to a coffeehouse and play a djembe, play legit percussion on some kind of jingle, and play in my Top 40 band at night. That was always my mindset—until I realized I needed to move to Nashville.

MD: What changed?

Rich: I decided I didn't want to always be playing the latest Coolio or Janet Jackson hit and playing in the night-clubs for a bunch of drunks. I knew that being truly successful meant I had to go to New York, L.A., or Nashville. I chose Nashville.

MD: What did you do when you got there?

Rich: I shook hands and took every gig that came along. I met a songwriter named Amy Dalley, who I still play with to this day. She called me and asked if I could go on the road the next day and learn sixty songs with no rehearsal. If I didn't read music or know where to come from stylistically or know how to write out a cheat chart, then I certainly wouldn't have been able to take that gig. The look on people's faces is incredible when you can come in and nail all the starts and endings and stops and tempos and dynamics. The goal for me is to always sound like I've been touring with the band for months.

MD: What's the biggest lesson you've learned in Nashville?

Rich: The drummers that work the most here are the ones who really know how to get to the heart of a song. It's the songwriting capital of the world, and everyone comes here to learn the craft of writing songs. So every day I'm presented with an opportunity to put my stamp on a song. You almost have to develop a sixth sense and instinctively figure out what something needs. The truth is, sometimes as a drummer I'm cranking out five songs in three hours, while in L.A. or New York they take three hours just to get the drum sound!

MD: Your Nashville reputation has become that of a "backbeat specialist."

Rich: Whether I'm playing rock or country or alt rock, using my hands or

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brushes or Blasticks, playing backbeats is something I'm called to do. You have to be able to read music and be versatile. Eventually you'll end up branding yourself, either by choice or because of a series of opportunities. Honestly, the unique opportunities that I've had really created a brand for me; I became the high-energy backbeat guy.

MD: I've heard that Dan Huff is one of your favorite producers to work with.

Rich: He called me to record for Steel Magnolia. I had to leave him a voice mail, and I remember him laughing when I said, "Dan, I've been waiting for you to call me for thirteen years—what have you been waiting for?"

MD: How does his style broaden your drumming in the studio?

Rich: He's like a doctor, and it's his bedside manner that makes him so successful. It's a people business, and he knows how to make sure everyone is comfortable and everyone knows each other. He makes you feel like you're part of something special. He takes suggestions, and he uses a lot of them. He lets you know that he appreciates what you do. The karma is there and the vibe is there, and it's a natural high. He'll say things like, "I love what you did with the toms—let's not muddy it up with the snare," or "I love your energy on the crashes on the bridge, but pull it back a little bit because you're oversaturating the mics." He's always lifting everyone up and encouraging people. Michael Knox, Jason Aldean's producer, is the same way in the studio.

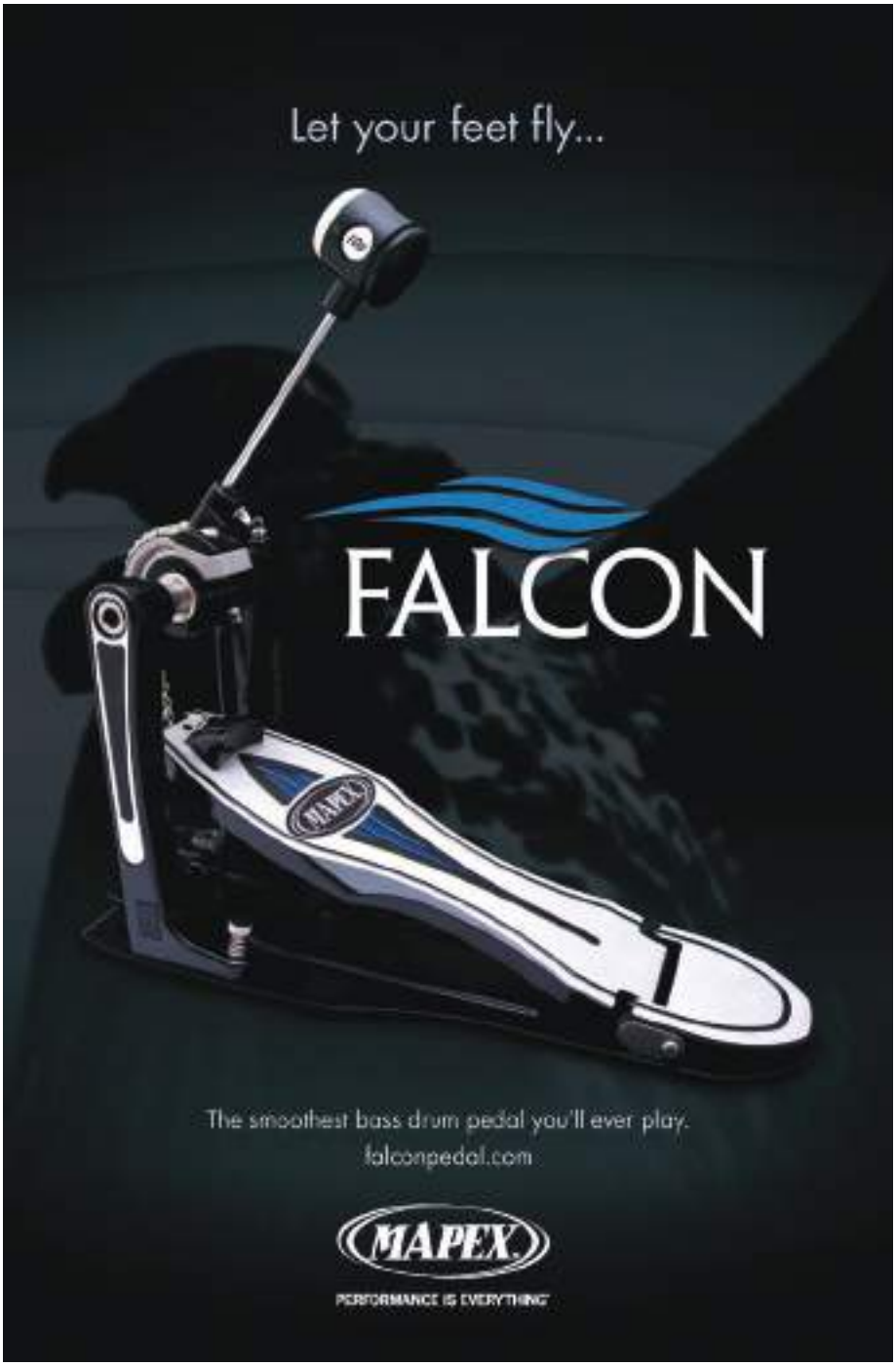
MD: How did you develop a reputation for being a musical drummer?

Rich: You have to have a musical mind, and you have to have a huge palette of music you've listened to. The well should be deep, so when instinct kicks in you have stuff to pull from. Your listening chops need to be developed from day one. Playing a melodic instrument helps; taking music theory and music history helps shape a musical mind.

You also have to play in time, make it feel good, and make it groove. I look to make sure I'm moving people and leading and driving the band. I never forget about the dynamics. Drummers don't realize how much power they have with their instrument. In the wrong hands a drumset is basically chaos, so it's how you put it together to make a musical statement. If a drummer plays with great dynamics, the whole band is forced to do the same thing.

MD: What do you do to get better?

Rich: The biggest thing is being accountable to myself. My to-do lists are always massive. I'm always striving to be a better musician, whether that means concentrating on my feel, my groove, or my time. It's about the musical choices I make in the studio and on the road, and the fact that I'm never mailing in a performance. It's a real gift to do what I do, so I always try to be accountable to myself and play with blood, sweat, tears, and the passion the music deserves.



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PART 5: **SAME-HAND FLAM ACCENT** by Bill Bachman

This month we're looking at what I call same-hand flam accents. In my Top 10 Rudiments series, I covered alternating flam accents (October 2009). When you play flam accents *without* alternating, they take on a new feel and require a different technique. The lead hand essentially plays a shuffle pattern, which requires a Moeller whip stroke. If you struggle or tighten up when playing fast shuffles, then this rudiment variation is for you! Same-hand flam accents are not only great as a training tool for developing the inverted hand motion, they're also extremely useful when voiced around the drumkit.

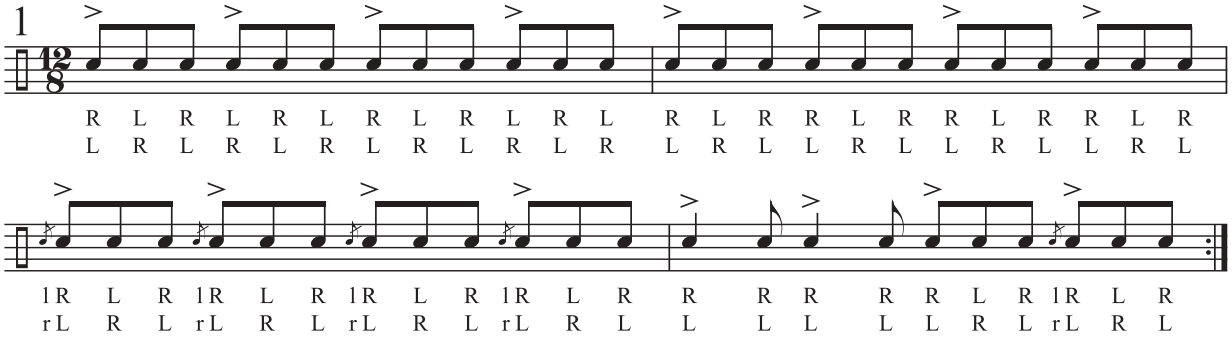
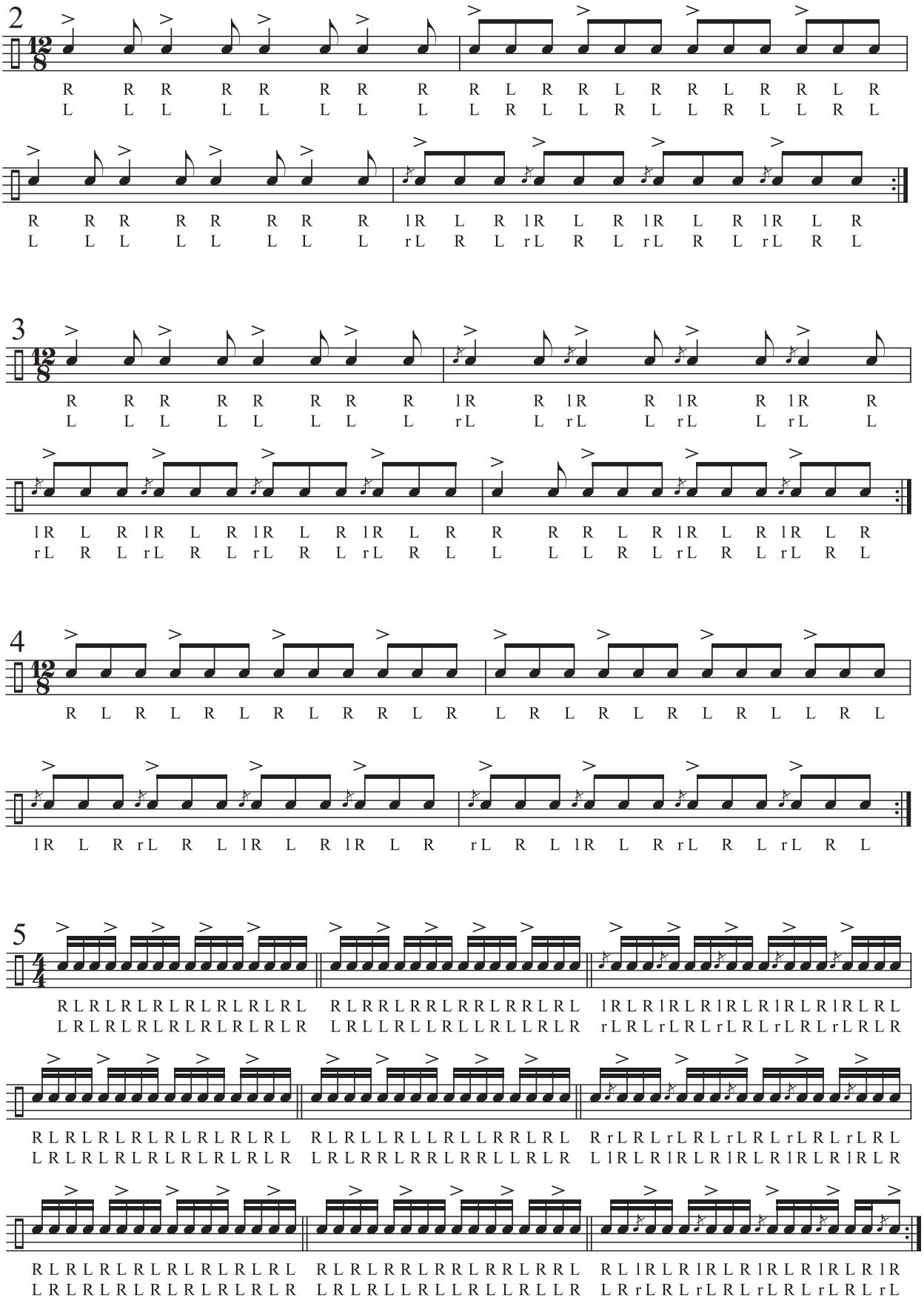
The sticking for standard flam accents alternates. When you play flam accents back to back leading with the same hand, however, there's a low tap played immediately before the accent with the same hand. This is the inverted hand motion, a key technique that will serve you far beyond the context of this rudiment variation.

When you play same-hand flam accents slowly, it's very easy to use wrist strokes (full, down, up, and tap strokes) with exact stick heights for dynamic contrast. But at medium and faster tempos, there's not enough time for the wrist to perform an upstroke tap immediately before the accent. Forcing the issue will generally lead to tension in the wrist, while also dragging the tempo and creating a rhythmic gap before the accent. In this case, many slow repetitions will *not* lead to high speed, since the faster tempo requires a totally different technique. Because the wrist can no longer handle the demand at higher tempos, let's not use it.

At medium to fast tempos, it's time to let the forearm take over, by way of the Moeller whip-stroke technique. Now the wrist can just relax and enjoy the ride. The tap immediately preceding the accented flam will be played with what I call a Moeller upstroke, where the stick hits the drum as you pick up the forearm and let the wrist hang limp. The forearm is then thrown down with the wrist relaxed so that the stick gets whipped toward the drum for the accent. The Moeller whip creates an accent, in part because of the slightly higher stick height, but mainly because of the higher velocity of the stroke.

At medium speeds, you may want to stifle the accent stroke's rebound in order to initiate the following tap. But at faster tempos where there's less time between each tap/accent combination, it's beneficial to let the accent stroke rebound. This way some of the accent's energy will flow into the next tap/accent combination so you don't have to start the process over from scratch. Keep in mind that if the flams are too wide, you'll need to whip the accent stroke with a faster forearm motion in order to get the stick to the drum sooner.

When you play the following exercises, be sure to coordinate the two hands so the flams sound consistent. Ideally, you want to be able to play these same-hand flam accents with flams that are very tight, wide and open, and everywhere in between. If you tighten up to stroke out the accent after the tap, then slow down to where you can play a relaxed and flowing whip stroke. (Tension will never develop in loose, flowing technique, no matter how many years you practice.) Play these exercises with a metronome or recorded music in order to train your hands with accurate timing and feel. Also be sure to practice leading with the left hand as well as the right. Good luck!



2
12/8
R R R R R R R R R L R R L R R L R R L R
L L L L L L L L L R L L R L L R L L R L
R R R R R R R R 1R L R 1R L R 1R L R 1R L R
L L L L L L L L rL R L rL R L rL R L rL R L
3
12/8
R R R R R R R R 1R R 1R R 1R R 1R R
L L L L L L L L rL L rL L rL L rL L
1R L R 1R L R 1R L R 1R L R R R R L R 1R L R 1R L R
rL R L rL R L rL R L rL R L L L L R L rL R L rL R L
4
12/8
R L R L R L R L R R L R L R L R L R L R L L R L
1R L R rL R L 1R L R 1R L R rL R L 1R L R rL R L rL R L
5
4/4
R L R L R L R L R L R L

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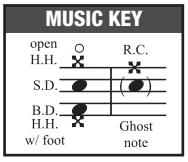
The Purdie Shuffle

Revisiting A Classic

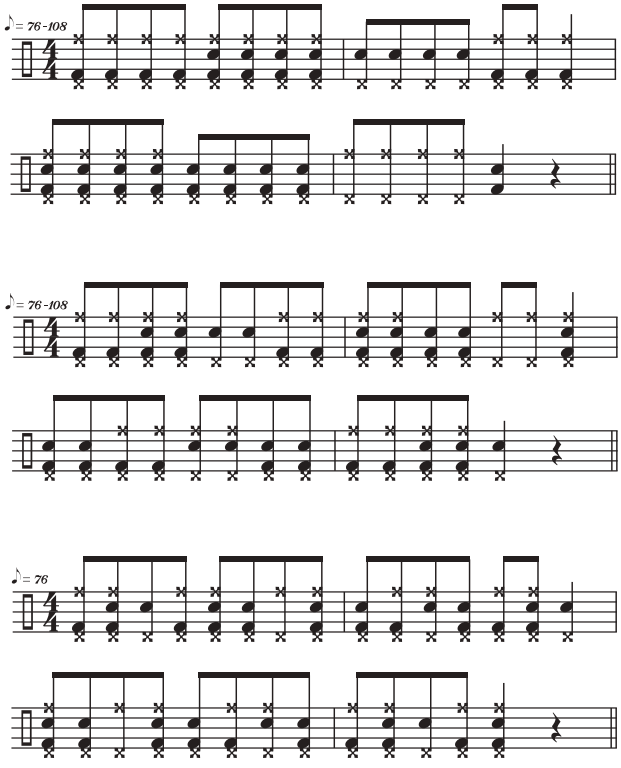
by Jim Payne



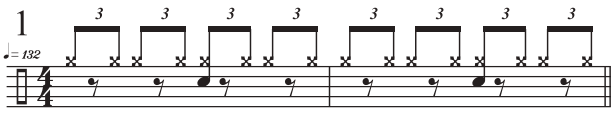
This article contains my personal step-by-step process for learning the super-funky Purdie shuffle, which was made famous by the legendary R&B drummer Bernard Purdie. The exercises outlined here—which were devised over an eight-day practice routine where I studied Bernard's signature beat on Steely Dan's "Home At Last," from the *Aja* album—are designed to take the mystery out of this classic half-time shuffle groove.

FIRST SESSION

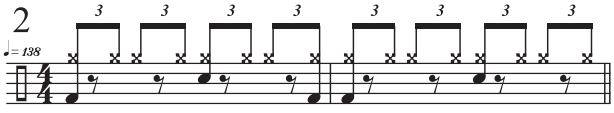
The Purdie shuffle demands strong chops, so I began by practicing exercises derived from the challenging book *4-Way Coordination*. The beat also requires steady notes with the foot on the hi-hat, so I incorporated that into the exercises. I put a quarter-note rest at the end of each four-bar phrase in order to relax and regroup before repeating the exercise. Concentrate on crisp execution with no flams between the limbs, while also letting your body flow with the pulse. It's important to avoid being stiff.



The Purdie shuffle is a half-time groove, so I thought the best way to write it was as 8th-note triplets with the backbeat on 3. Here's the basic hi-hat and snare drum pattern.

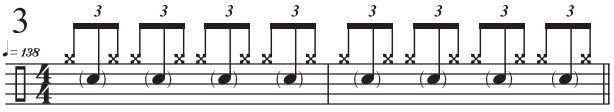


Adding the bass drum gives you a basic half-time shuffle—a great groove in itself.

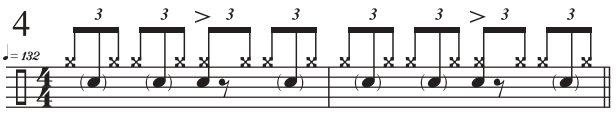


I usually keep both heads on the kick to get an open jazz/funk sound with a distinct pitch. But for straight-ahead funk or pop/funk, you need more of a boxing-glove *thud*. So I took off the front head, put in a nice fuzzy blanket, and topped it off with a good-size rock to keep the blanket in place and get an even heavier sound. With this setup, I could bury the beater in the head without getting double hits. I also increased the tension on the pedal to get more action from it, since this groove requires quick double strokes.

Next, I practiced filling in the triplets with the snare. It's important to play the hi-hat and snare very softly and at the same volume. (Soft snare hits are called ghost notes.)

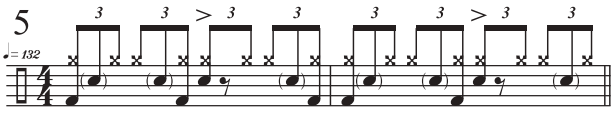


Now try putting the backbeat on 3.



SECOND SESSION

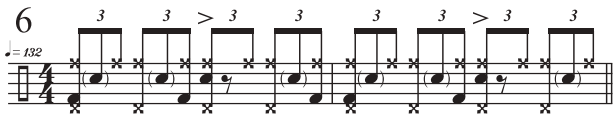
I began my second session with ten minutes of coordination exercises to loosen up. Then I worked on combining the half-time shuffle in Example 2 with the filled-in triplets from Example 4.



Bernard came to my gig one night at the North Sea Jazz Festival. I asked him to sit in, and as he went up he said, "You've got to put a little more bass drum in your shuffle." He got on the stand and proceeded to demonstrate on the next

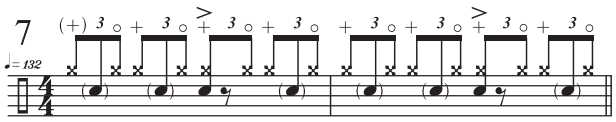
tune. He had just the right balance among the cymbal, snare, and bass drum. The bass drum was driving but not overpowering.

Because the Purdie shuffle requires steady notes on the hi-hat with the foot, the inevitable question is: Should I bounce my left foot or keep it flat on the footboard? To me, bouncing feels right some of the time. But at other times it takes too much energy to always keep your leg lifted. I decided to try both methods when I practiced the following groove with the right hand on the ride cymbal.

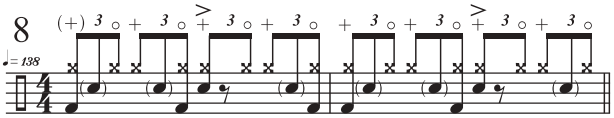


THIRD SESSION

After ten minutes of jamming and ten minutes of coordination practice with a metronome, I figured it was time to get serious about the hi-hat part in the Purdie shuffle. I worked on the following exercise with the heel up and with the heel down. (I was still unsure which way to go.) The main problem with the bouncing technique is that the left foot doesn't always come up when the right hand comes down, which can create sloppy hi-hat sounds. I tried laying back on the beat, and that seemed to help.



Next, I isolated the left foot and just played quarters using the bouncing technique. Then I decided to see what would happen when I added the bass drum and put the entire beat together.



I was playing the beat, but it was sloppy and uneven, with no feel or groove. Basically, I wasn't comfortable enough with it to relax and concentrate on time and feel. I was too caught up in the coordination and mechanics.

FOURTH SESSION

The next day I didn't notice much improvement. I invented some more exercises and played them, but I didn't see any real progress.

FIFTH SESSION

On this day, I changed tactics. I tried just playing the shuffle for a while, concentrating on precise coordination and execution. I was doing well, but I was so intent on getting it right that I overdid it. I burned out and got leg cramps. I had to remind myself—as I have many times in the past—that I couldn't learn this beat by playing it for eight hours straight without stopping. It would likely take a few days of shorter sessions before I really had it under control.

THE PURDIE SHUFFLE

SIXTH SESSION

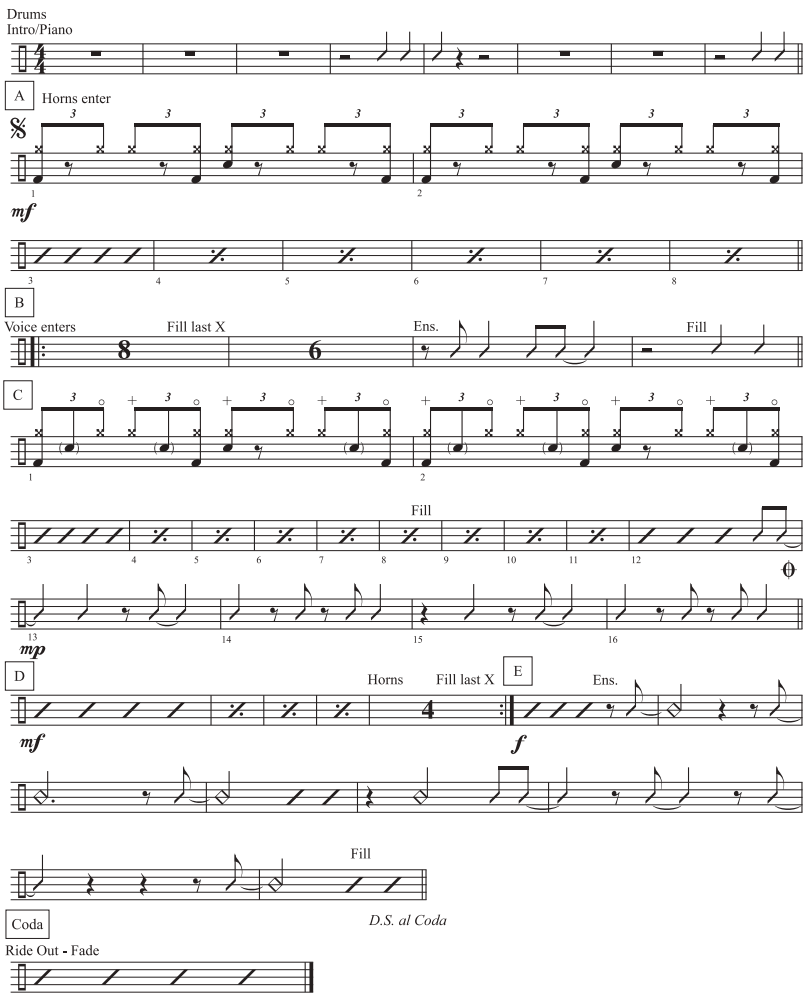
I started this session by playing the shuffle for five minutes, stopping, and then doing something else for half an hour. Then I played the beat for another five minutes.

I hadn't seen any results for a few days, which caused me to start judging myself too quickly. That was a mistake. I had to be confident that eventually my muscles would learn to play the groove correctly.

SEVENTH SESSION

I decided that if I really wanted to nail the Purdie shuffle, I should learn the entire chart to "Home At Last." It's one thing to learn a beat, but it's another thing to memorize the structure, the figures, and the dynamics of a complete tune.

Purdie's performance on "Home At Last" is brilliant. His groove is flawless, even when he's catching ensemble hits. He also throws in some tasty accents and fills, and he plays with incredible dynamics.

I wrote out a drum chart and started seriously listening and playing along to the song. Then I recorded myself on video playing the tune. On the first take, I looked awkward and shaky, and the groove was weak. There was clearly more work to do. Here's the chart:

EIGHTH SESSION

For my final day of practicing the Purdie shuffle, I started a routine where I'd play "Home At Last" two or three times during each session. I ended up using the heel-down technique on the hi-hat. A week had gone by, and I now felt good enough to record myself playing the song again. You can see videos of all the examples and the final result of my playing along with Purdie on moderndrummer.com and in the digital edition of *MD*.

Jim Payne has played with Maceo Parker and the J.B. Horns and has produced records for Medeski Martin & Wood. He teaches in New York City and online. His new book/DVD, *Advanced Funk Drumming*, was recently released by Modern Drummer Publications. For more on Jim, visit funkydrummer.com.

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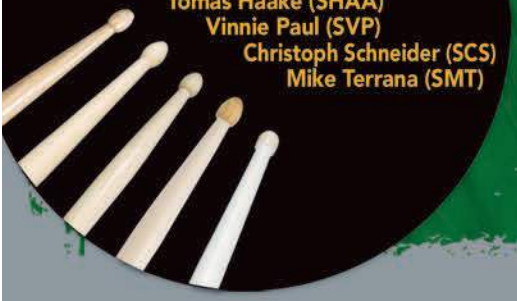

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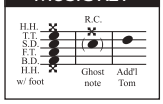
Polyrhythms

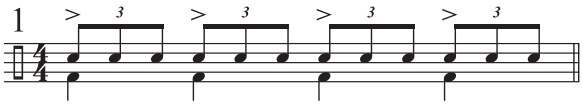
PART 7: THREE AGAINST FOUR by Rod Morgenstein

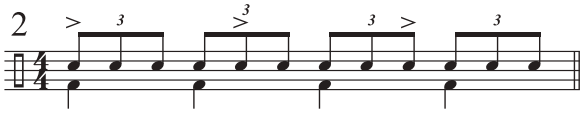
MUSIC KEY



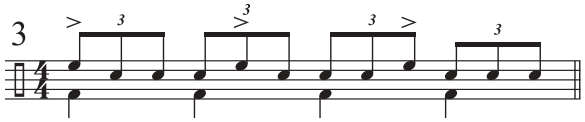
The previous six articles focused on four-against-three polyrhythms. This time we're centering our attention on the opposite: three-against-four polyrhythms.

Eighth-note triplets are often played with the emphasis on the first note of the triplet, as in Example 1.

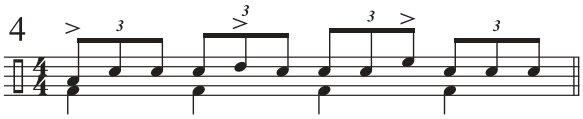
1

To create the three-against-four polyrhythm, accent every fourth triplet note. Try tapping quarter notes with the foot while playing this accent pattern. As an added challenge, see if you can count out loud at the same time: "1, 2, 3, 4" or "1-trip-let, 2-trip-let, 3-trip-let, 4-trip-let."

2

Example 3 moves the accents to the small tom.

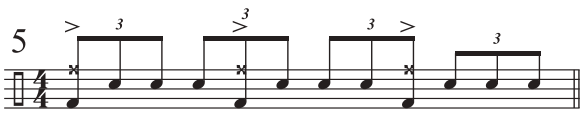
3



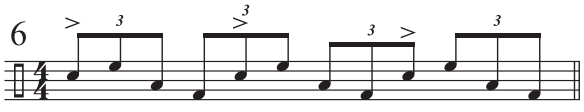
Experiment with the sounds in your own kit. Example 4 places each accent on a different tom.

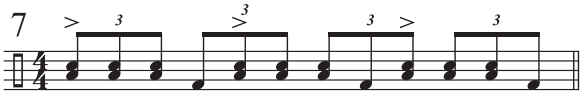
4

Example 5 has the accents played with the ride cymbal and bass drum.

5



Example 6 is a typical four-note lick on the snare, rack tom, floor tom, and kick that works very well with the three-against-four polyrhythm.

6

Examples 7 and 8 have the hands playing together while the feet play the last note of the four-note pattern.

7

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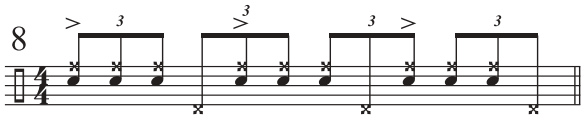
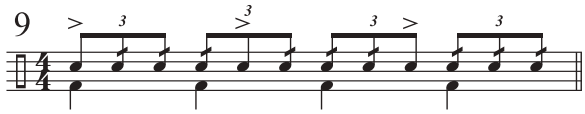


Seven-stroke rolls work well in a three-against-four context. Play double strokes on all of the unaccented notes.

9

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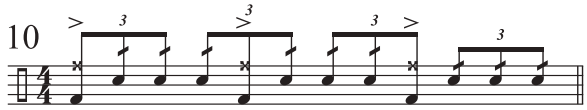
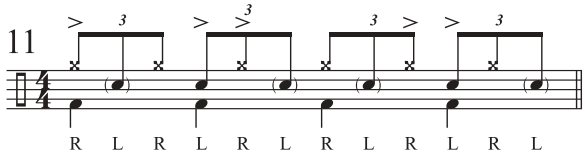
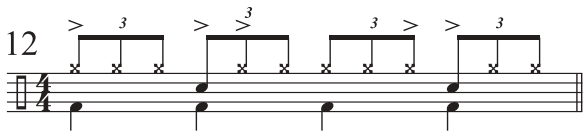

The following example applies the polyrhythm in the context of a groove. Play the hi-hat with the right hand and the snare with the left (or the opposite if you're a lefty). Play all the snare notes except the backbeat very softly (as ghost notes), and keep the four-on-the-floor bass drum solid.

11

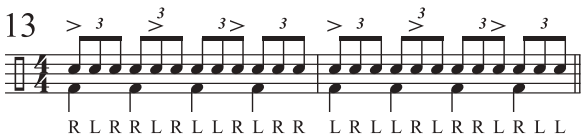


Example 12 is another basic beat using the three-against-four polyrhythm.

12



Paradiddles work well in this polyrhythm because they consist of four-note stickings: RLRR and LRLL. Get comfortable playing Example 13, as our next outing will explore different ways to use this wonderful rudiment. Drum on!

13

Rod Morgenstein is a founding member of the groundbreaking fusion band Dixie Dregs. He was also a member of the progressive Steve Morse Band, and he continues to play with the pop/metal band Winger. In addition, Rod has performed with the Rudess/ Morgenstein Project, Jazz Is Dead, Platypus, and the Jelly Jam. He is currently a professor of percussion at Berklee College Of Music.

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DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN'S Billy Rymer

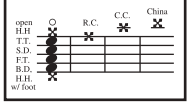
Option Paralysis by Terry Branam

Nathaniel Shannon

The high mental and physical demands of the Dillinger Escape Plan's music require two main things from the drum seat: a penchant for handling complex rhythms and a deep, heavy pocket. These skills are rare to find in the same player, as each requires a lifetime of dedication. True to form, the group has a reputation for employing superhuman drummers like Chris Pennie and Gil Sharone. Luckily, newest member Billy Rymer is up for the task of deciphering the Dillinger code. "Learning their music was like learning a new language," Rymer explains. "I imported their older songs into Pro Tools, so I could slow them down. Then I charted them on graph paper in three-second increments. When you're breaking it down like that, you start to see where the rhythms repeat, like words in sentences. It's a more lyrical approach to drumming, and there's a certain circular pattern to each phrase."

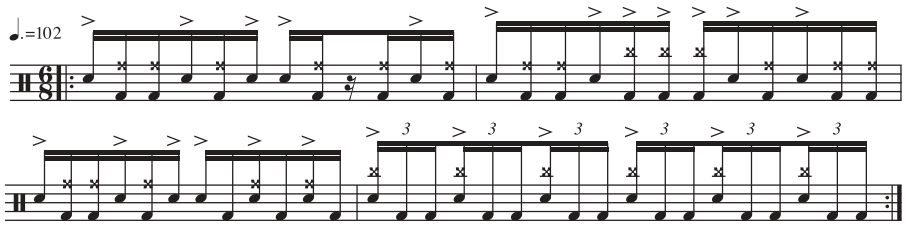
Dillinger Escape Plan's latest release, *Option Paralysis*, is an action-packed adventure through impossible time signatures, dense cross-rhythms, breakneck tempos, and bone-crunching grooves. Here's a peek at some of Rymer's intense drum parts from the album.

MUSIC KEY



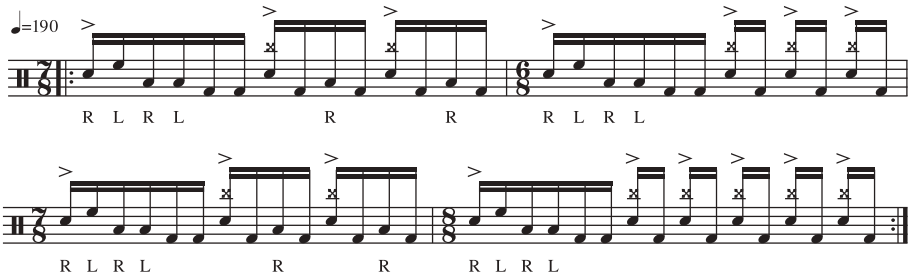
"FAREWELL, MONA LISA"

The first single from *Option Paralysis* starts with thematic guitar chords and then proceeds to hit you like a ton of bricks. After the ultra-aggressive intro, the guitar sets up an interesting 6/8 section. Rymer outlines the rhythm between his hands and feet, a common way of phrasing in the Dillinger dialect. (0:49)



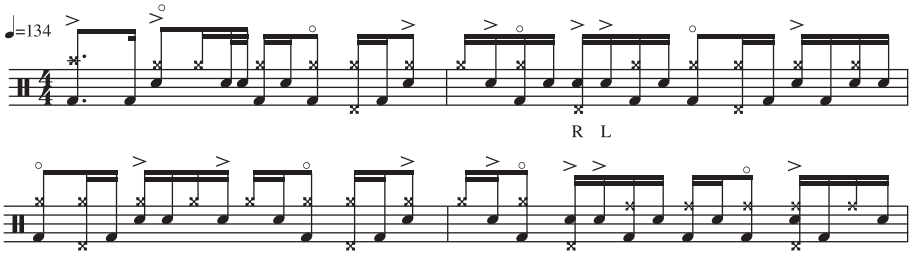
"GOOD NEIGHBOR"

"This is the hardest song to play on the record," Rymer says. "I don't think about counting out the parts, and they're not in specific time signatures. You have to learn the words and sentences and how long each phrase lasts." In the intro, Billy plays a blistering gospel-chops-inspired fill that matches up perfectly with the guitar riff. (0:00)



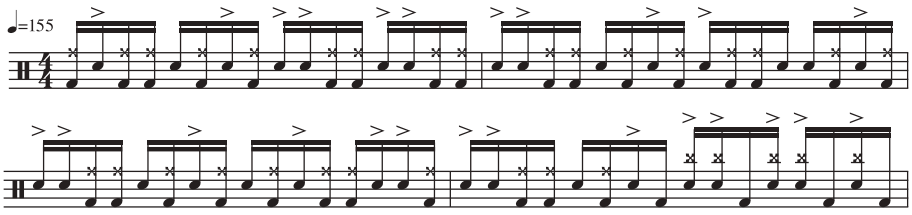
"GOLD TEETH ON A BUM"

Rymer gives a nod to the James Brown drummers with this funky groove. (3:54)

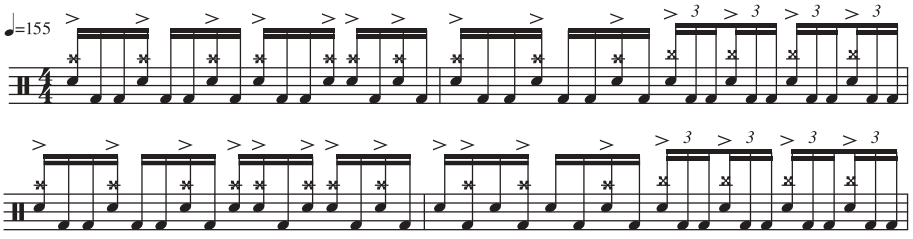


"CRYSTAL MORNING"

The middle section of "Crystal Morning" features an elusive over-the-barline 4/4 pattern. The guitar and drums give the illusion of odd time signatures with their unpredictable phrasing. Rymer's snare accents tie the groupings together. (0:53)

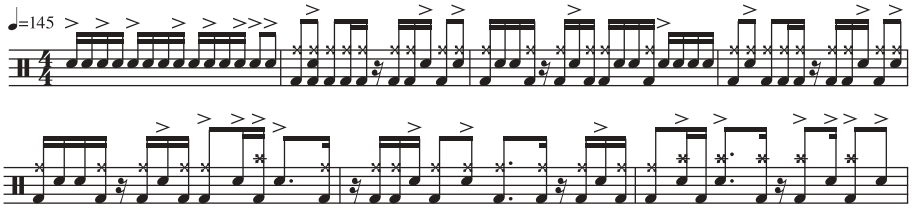


Billy offsets the guitar melody by playing some punchy accents interspersed with quick bass drum fill-ins. (1:12)



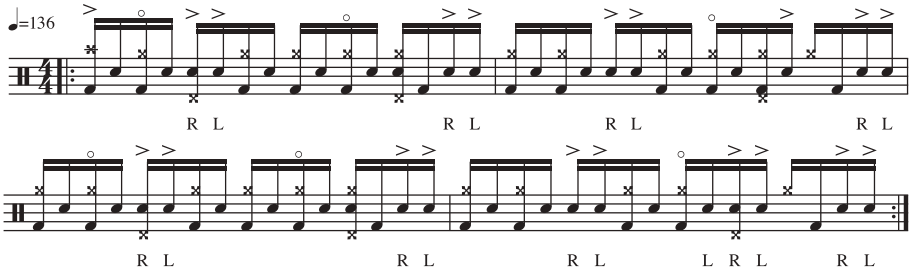
"ENDLESS ENDINGS"

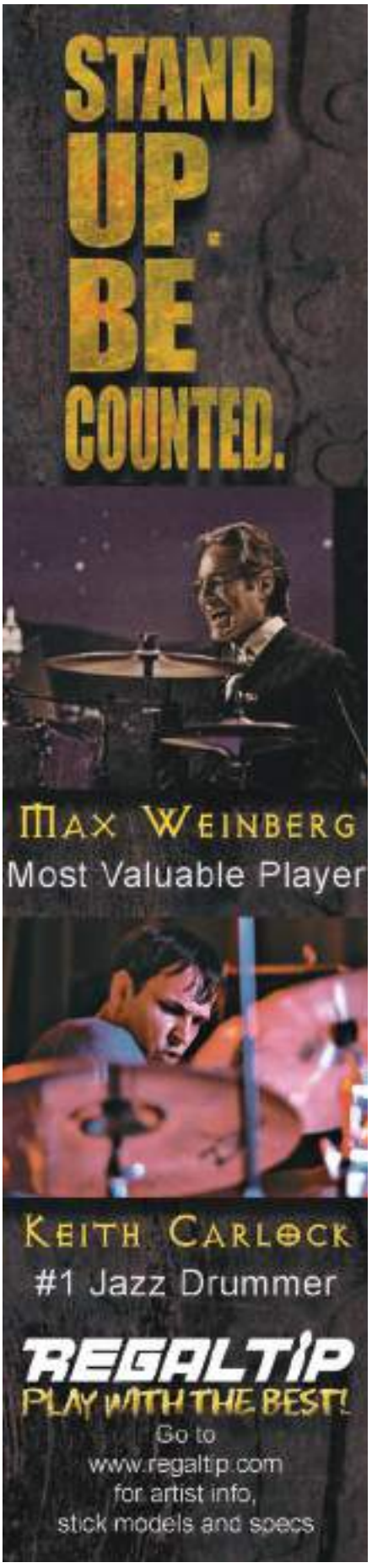
Rymer shows off his Latin chops in this section of "Endless Endings." (0:28)



"WIDOWER"

This machinelike groove serves as a hook to the song. (2:19)





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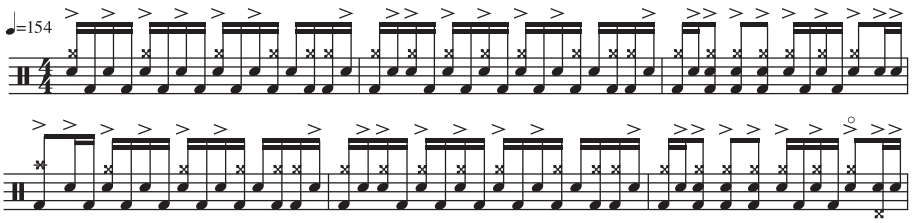
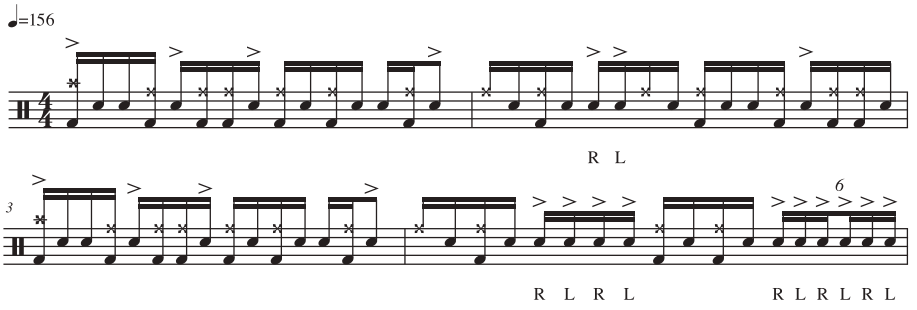
"ROOM FULL OF EYES"

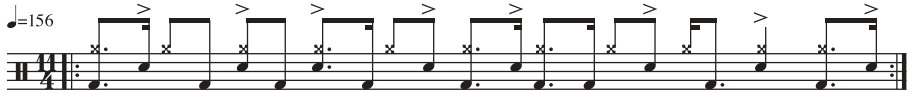
Here's another instance where Billy uses alternating hand/foot combinations. The quirky guitar syncopation provides some unexpected twists along the way. (1:35)



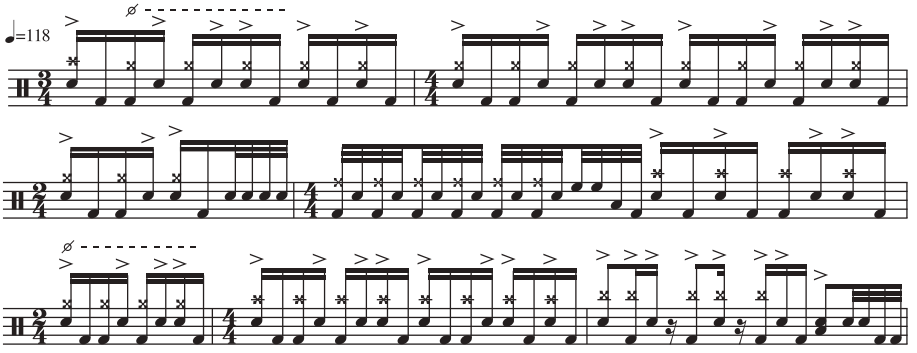
"CHINESE WHISPERS"

Rymer uses a funky drum 'n' bass–type groove to set up the beginning of the chorus on this track. (0:48)



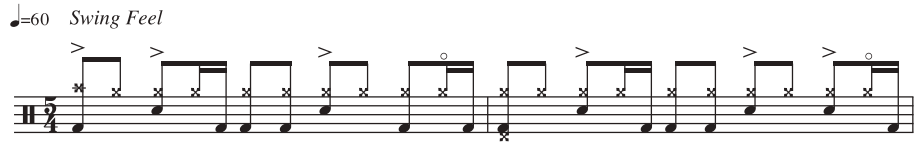
Here's a wildly syncopated figure from the bridge of "Chinese Whispers." The 11/4 time can also be broken into 5/4 plus 6/4. (2:29)

"I WOULDN'T IF YOU DIDN'T"

When asked how he keeps himself focused during the band's ultradense parts, Rymer explains, "A lot of it is just muscle memory. I've done it over and over again, so it's embedded, and it never leaves. I also had to learn how to breathe while playing blast beats. I'll blast on an inhale and then blast on an exhale." In this song Billy uses inverted paradiddle variations between the bass drum and snare. Also check out the fast blast beat that's capped off with a 3:2 rumba clave quote. (0:43)



"PARASITIC TWINS"

Rymer stays in the pocket on the album's melancholy closer. It's hardly noticeable that the time signature is 5/4. (0:20)



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Black Eyed Peas' KEITH HARRIS

Interview and photos by Sayre Berman

DRUMS: Tama Starclassic Bubinga Elite in indigo titanium racing stripe finish
A. 7x13 maple snare with Pintech Trigger Perfect snare trigger
B. 7x8 tom
C. 7x10 tom
D. 12x12 tom
Not shown: Starphonic 6x14 brass snare

Harris uses a combination of electronic and acoustic drums because of the blend of sounds on the Black Eyed Peas' new album. "*The E.N.D.* is very electro/dance-influenced," he says. "Will.i.am didn't want *any* acoustic drums on stage. I snuck some in because it was a little difficult to bring up the energy and the dynamics playing live with just electronic drums. The electronic drums take up about 80 percent of my playing on this tour because during the show we're duplicating just about every song on the record."

HARDWARE: Tama Power Tower rack system, Iron Cobra bass drum pedals and hi-hat stand, and 1st Chair Ergo-Rider throne

ELECTRONICS:
aa. Roland SPD-S
bb. 13" Pintech VisuLite cymbal (fluorescent green)
cc. 13" Pintech VisuLite hi-hats (fluorescent green)
dd. 16" Pintech VisuLite cymbal (fluorescent green)
ee. Pintech DB 12 Dingbat trigger
ff. Pintech K-3 Ergokik trigger
gg. Pintech 12" Concert Cast pad
hh. Pintech 12" Concert Cast kick pad
Not shown: ddrum 4 SE module

"I use the pads for the snare and toms and the triggers for claves, cowbells, and things of that sort. The trigger pads and pedals take up less space, which is great when you're trying to shove a lot of drums into very little space. I have three bass drum trigger pads because on some songs, like 'Boom Boom Pow' and 'Imma Be,' I play various bass drum pitches."

MICS: Shure Beta 98 (on toms and cymbals), SM57 (two on snare), and SM81 (on hi-hats)

CYMBALS: Sabian
1. 12" Vault Artisan hi-hats
2. 12" HHX Legacy splash
3. 16" Vault Artisan crash
4. 18" Vault Artisan crash

STICKS: Pro-Mark 3AL Keith Harris Autograph model

HEADS: Remo clear Emperor tom batters and clear Ambassador bottoms, coated Ambassador snare batters

John Fogerty's KENNY ARONOFF

Photos by Rick Malkin

DRUMS: Tama Starclassic Maple in ultraviolet sparkle
A. 5x12 maple piccolo snare (green sparkle)
B. 6 1/2x14 bubinga snare
C. 5x14 Trackmaster snare (Aronoff signature model)
D. 11x12 tom
E. 18x22 bass drum
F. 9x10 tom
G. 14x14 floor tom
H. 14x20 bass drum (brown fade)
I. 16x16 floor tom
J. 14x26 bubinga bass drum

"John Fogerty is very particular about the sound of every instrument, whether it's guitar, bass, drums, vocals, or keys," Aronoff says. "These three snares were used on recordings I made with him. They're all tuned differently, to a specific sound that he approves of. The only one that's muffled is the bubinga, because it's tuned way down to get a deep, fat sound. John brought his own kick and snares when I recorded with him on [1997's] *Blue Moon Swamp*. It was an 18x22 Tama maple kick with a Remo Fiberskyn 3 batter head. He also brought five or six pre-1960s 5x14 Ludwig Supra-Phonic 400 snares with coated Ambassador heads. John would personally tune these drums every day. He knew just how he wanted the kick drum muffled, and he applied two or three small pieces of moleskin to the snare in certain places.

"I use three kick drums to get different sounds. I use the main 22" kick 98 percent of the time. I added the small 20" kick for the softer, less rock songs on John's *Blue Ridge Rangers Rides Again* CD. The 26" kick is used to sound like an old military concert drum for one song. To get that boomy sound, I let the beater come off the head, and there's no muffling."

CYMBALS: Zildjian
1. 14" Mastersound hi-hats
2. 19" A Custom crash
3. 15" New Beat hi-hats
4. 21" A Custom Projection ride
5. 19" Z Custom crash

"I love having two hi-hats for different sounds. Also, having the right-side cable hi-hat makes it possible to avoid crossing my hands when I play. I can keep my body straight and square. I hit my snare hard, and I've always had to raise my right hand out of the way when I play the hi-hat in the traditional position."

HEADS: Remo Coated Emperor X (without dot) batter on main snare, clear snare-side Ambassador on bottom, coated CS Ambassador batter on auxiliary snares, coated Emperor tom batters, clear Ambassador tom bottoms, Fiberskyn 3 on 22" kick (with Falam Slam patch for reinforcement), clear Powerstroke 3 on auxiliary kicks, painted Ambassador front heads

"I like my 10" and 12" toms to have as much tone and sustain as possible. I tune the 14" and 16" floor toms so they have just the right amount of sustain, attack, and clarity. The challenge is to get all four toms to sound like they're part of the same family. I tune the bottom head first, to the point where there's a pure sustained tone with no buzzing. Then I tune the top head up until the drum sounds great. I'll adjust the heads up or down until they're working well with each other."

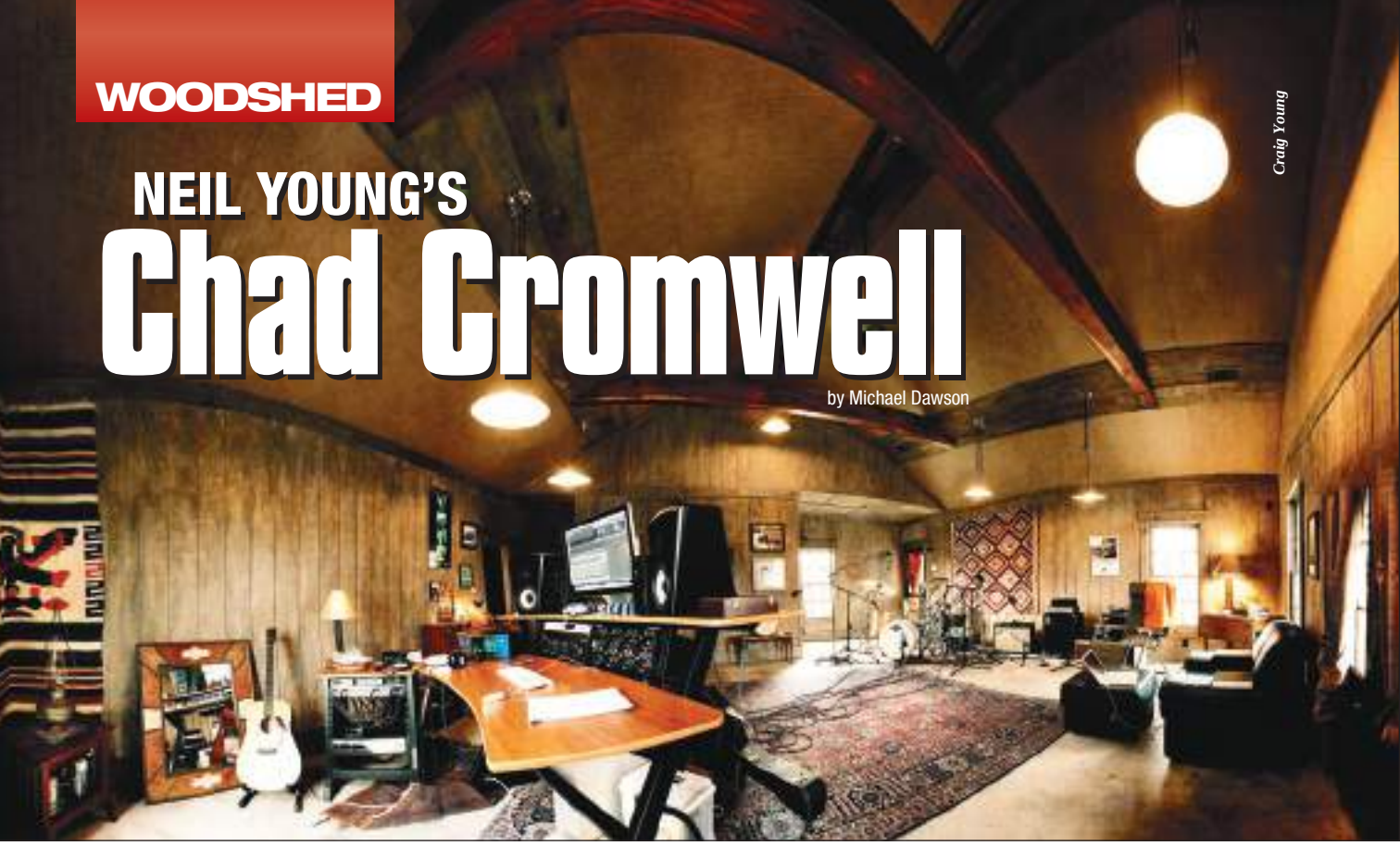
PERCUSSION: Meinl 8" Kenny Aronoff signature cowbell

ELECTRONICS: ddrum pad (for handclaps on "Centerfield"), kick triggers, and brain; Alesis SR-16 drum machine; Mackie mixer; ButtKicker transducer (on throne)

"I use the Alesis SR-16 to get tempos on certain songs. The ddrum trigger on my kick goes to a ddrum brain. This triggered sound is only for me and not the audience. I use a sixteen-channel Mackie mixer so I can make adjustments while I'm playing. It's way faster than having my tech run over to the monitor guy to make changes. I have my acoustic kick drum in one channel and the ddrum kick sample in another. I run both those sounds to the ButtKicker. I also have a monitor behind me that's just for kick drum."

NEIL YOUNG'S Chad Cromwell

by Michael Dawson


Craig Young

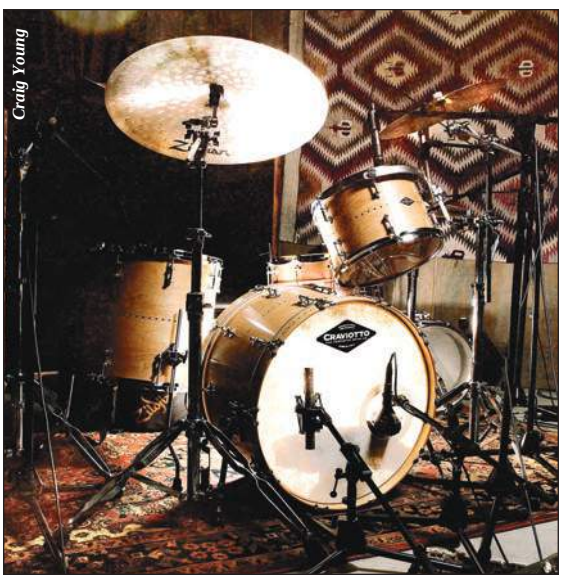
Longtime Neil Young drummer and top Nashville session musician Chad Cromwell has one of the most beautiful home studios we've ever seen. But just over three years ago, the drummer's farm, which is located about forty miles from downtown Nashville in southwestern Williamson County, was the victim of one of the worst natural disasters in the region's history. "On February 5, 2007, an F-3 and an F-1 tornado blew through the back of my property and took down my barn, scattering my possessions everywhere," Cromwell recalls. "The storm killed one of my horses and took out five acres of timber and twenty acres of perimeter fencing. It was a nasty mess."

As FEMA trucks and local volunteers arrived to help clear the wreckage, Cromwell envisioned what would become of his demolished storage barn. "Board by board, we hauled everything to the dump, one trailer load at a time," the drummer says. "When we finally got the place cleaned up, we had a blank slate of concrete. That's when I decided to build a studio.

"We sat down with a builder named Len Russell and told him what we wanted to do with the place," Chad continues. "Once we got the construction to the point where they were running the siding inside, a recording engineer named Niko Bolas, who coproduced a bunch of Neil Young stuff I played on, came out to see how the construction was going. When he walked in and clapped his hands, he said, 'You have to stop right now.' He told me not to put up any more live surfaces. That's why one end of the room has siding at the top, while the other has soundboard covered with cloth. The entire ceiling has sound-

Craig Young

Cromwell's original barn, post tornado blast



Craig Young

BRIAN FRASIER-MOORE

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For Brian Frasier-Moore, it's all about resonance, something his new Signature snare offers in droves. But this is a drum that goes beyond resonance. With its 5.5"x14" 8-ply all-Bubinga shell, it also delivers quick response and remarkable tonal versatility. It's a drum that can be tuned down for a fat, low sound, cranked up high like a piccolo, or anything in between. So whether he's touring with Madonna, Christina Aguilera, Janet Jackson, or any number of other major touring acts, Brian has exactly what he needs–all in one drum. A Mirror Chrome shell inlay helps broaden its already wide tonal range and merges with the drum's outer ply of richly quilted bubinga to give it a look that's all class.

BEARING EDGE
The BFM1455's unique bearing edge allows for the most energy transfer between the head and shell, giving added clarity and a full, resonant tone.

CHROME INLAY
A flash mirror chrome inlay complements the Quilted Bubinga outer ply of the shell.

CARBON SNAPPY SNARES
TAMA's 42-strand carbon steel snappy snares offer greatly increased sensitivity and better snare response through various tensions.

Check out what Brian has to say about his new snare on video at:
www.tama.com

GEAR BOX

DRUMS: Craviotto (various maple, cherry, and Diamond series)
"I've known Johnny [Craviotto] since '87," Cromwell says. "He came out to Neil's ranch when we were recording a Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young record and showed me a few hand-steamed snare drums called Solid. I'd never seen a snare drum like that before. I ended up getting a little 4x14, and I still have it. When he started building kits, Johnny sent me one to use on a session. The first day I played them, it was over. I had never played a drumset like that in my life. They don't crap out when you really lay into them, and they speak very well when you're playing lightly. They have a lot of openness but are also very focused."

Chad also uses various drums and percussion instruments from Ludwig, DW, Joyful Noise, Vaughncraft, Meinl, and Gon Bops.

CYMBALS: Zildjian (various)
"Right now I'm playing a lot of K Light cymbals. I like the 16" hi-hats and the 24" ride. I'm also a big fan of the K Custom Dark line. They made me some big 19" and 20" crashes. And I've used 20" and 22" K Constantinople Medium Hi Bell rides as crashes."

HEADS: Remo
"I like Remo coated Ambassadors on the toms and a clear Powerstroke 3 on the kick. I tune my toms low, almost to the point of wrinkling. The bottom head is up just a little bit, to get some openness. For the kick, I get all the lugs to medium tension and then detune the top two lugs almost to the point of coming completely loose. I usually pad the drum with a DW hourglass pillow. That helps keep the beater from flamming when I play off the ball of my foot."

STICKS: Vic Firth

MICROPHONES:
Toms: Mojave Audio MA-100. "These small-diaphragm tube condensers can take a lot of sound pressure. They have a pretty focused pattern with gigantic low end and really crisp, clear top end."
Kick: Royer 122 ribbon mic (outside), Audio-Technica ATM25 (inside). "It's good to have that warm low end of the ribbon mic sitting outside the front head, just to have a little support."
Overheads: Mojave Audio MA-200. "They're comparable to a [Neumann] U 87, but they're not nearly as expensive."
Rooms: Coles 4038. "Those mics are at a 45-degree angle looking at a stereo image of the kit. One mic is vertical, and the other is upside down and on top. They're set about three feet off the ground, so they're getting a lot of the guts of the kit."
Other: Sennheiser 421 and 441, Shure SM57 and SM81, AKG D 112

MISCELLANEOUS STUDIO GEAR:
Apple Mac Pro 2.66 Quad-Core Xeon computer
Pro Tools HD
Universal Audio UAD-2 Quad DSP accelerator card and 6176 channel strip
Waves API plug-in bundle
Shadow Hills Gama and Equinox preamps
A Designs Audio P-1 preamps
API 550B equalizers
Lynx Aurora 16 AD/DA converters
NHT M-60 and M-00 monitors
Focusrite Liquid Mix
Quiklok studio desk and stands

board and cloth. It sounds great, but nobody came in with devices to tune the room. We just got lucky."

Since Cromwell still gets called into the big Nashville studios on a regular basis to record major projects, including recent modern country hits by Lady Antebellum and Miranda Lambert, we asked why he felt he needed his own studio at home. "I built this place anticipating that a percentage of my work is going to shift toward more overdubbing and Internet-based kinds of recordings," Chad says. "My production work is starting to take off a bit too. That came around after I started writing with Kenny Greenberg and Tom Douglas. We've had a lot of interest in what we're doing, so we decided to start a production company. There was no business plan. We just wanted to find some young artists to work with."

Cromwell takes an organic approach to production, with musicians playing together in the same room rather than overdubbing instruments

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bit by bit to a click track. "We have a new generation of musicians, producers, and artists that don't have a lot of experience with rhythm-section, performance-oriented recording," Chad explains. "What they're accustomed to doing is building tracks with a laptop or a small Pro Tools rig, just wildcatting the best way they can. That's produced some brilliant music. But it's a different way of doing it. I'm originally from Memphis, and I was taught how to record by the guy who founded Stax Records, Jim Stewart. I learned that it's all about who you are—your soul—and how that affects the way you express yourself and execute your parts. And the take starts at the beginning of the song and doesn't stop until it's over."

In order to capture the best vibe for each track, Cromwell often starts with the groove. "The first thing I think about when I'm starting a session is the feel," he says. "Where do I want the backbeat to land? Where's the tempo really living? I have to find that spot where there's a draft of air, just like driving a car. Some cars are designed to function most efficiently at certain speeds, and when they find their zone they'll suddenly drop an inch or two. I think grooves work the same way. You have to find that zone, and it starts from the drummer's internal clock. After you've found the right tempo, *then* you introduce a click to establish consistency."

But what if the artist or songwriter already has a specific tempo in mind? "A lot of times, guys come into sessions with great-sounding demos they've built up using drum loops or something," Cromwell explains. "But once you get a live rhythm section together, the tempo is most likely going to change because the language of the song changes when different people put their hands on it. That's the conversational aspect of music making that you can't do alone or with just one other person.

"If you listen to Al Jackson in the '60s or Jeff Porcaro in the '70s and '80s," Cromwell continues, "you're going to hear two vastly different types of players. But you'll almost always hear what I feel are the essentials of playing a song properly. For example, when you're in a verse, you're playing from your 'lockdown' place. That's where everything is static and really stable. Then you hit a little channel that's going to start setting up the chorus. When you hit that channel, there's a change of emotion. It doesn't mean you speed up, but you want to emote that there's a change going on, so maybe you lean a little more forward to imply that you're speeding up. Then, once you arrive at the chorus, you have to push. The chorus is the payoff of the song. It's the high point dynamically, so you'll hear great drummers lift the tempo a little when they're filling into the chorus."

How does all of this relate to playing with a click track, which has become common practice for almost all studio sessions these days? "I always play around the click," Cromwell says. "If your lowest common denominator is that everything has to be dead on the grid and quantized, then you're eliminating the inhale and exhale of the music. You're just running a static sonic experience across two speakers. It might wow you with volume and compression, but the timeless stuff that we listen to over and over again moves and breathes and sometimes even has a mistake or two in it. That's part of the human experience that's sometimes taken out of music today."

Since Chad's studio is now firing on all cylinders, we conclude our conversation with the drummer by asking if this project was part of a conscious effort to shift his career from that of a road dog to more of a homebody. "By the end of the last tour with Neil, we'd been all over the world twice in thirteen months," Cromwell says. "I'm grateful that I've been able to support my family that way over the years. But it feels like now is the time to start helping young artists define who they are by playing on demo sessions here at my studio, working with writers, and just being a bigger part of the music community in Nashville."

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THE ETTES' PONI

A former dancer finds her calling, playing drums with one of **today's premier garage-rock bands.**

by Steven Douglas Losey

Klaas Guchelaar, kjguch.com

"I want my kick drum to sound like I just got into a fight and won, and I can't *wait* to run home and tell my friends about it."

When Maria "Poni" Silver kicks into a beat, it's like the garage walls are coming down. As drummer for the Ettes, Poni has always approached her kit from a different headspace. "I was a dancer for about fourteen years, and I think that's why I liked drumming so much," she says. "They're both rhythmic and have this tribal way of communicating, which works for me because I'm not much of a talker anyway."

The truth is, Poni's never had to do much talking. Her style is brash and energetic, and even though she's petite in stature, she's a hard hitter, driving every beat with authority, which suits the band's music to a tee. "It's pretty funny, because until I get off stage, people assume that I'm this massive hulk of a woman," the drummer says with a laugh. "I'm actually quite small, so I guess whatever I'm saying back there is pretty big.

"I'm obsessed with my kick drum," Poni adds. "My right leg is the heartbeat of every song, and I want it to sound like I just got into a fight and won, and I can't *wait* to run home and tell my friends about it."

Hearing the call to be a drummer was a moment that Poni won't soon forget. It was more of a destiny, discovering an outlet that suited her perfectly. "I was going through a crisis and decided that my life was not going the way I wanted it to," she remembers. "As soon as I picked up those sticks, I knew without a doubt that this is what I'm called to do. So I did it."

The Ettes' third album, *Do You Want Power*, was produced by Greg Cartwright (Mary Weiss, Mr. Airplane Man, the Cuts) and features Poni and bassist Jeremy "Jem" Cohen finding the pocket throughout. On the opener, "Red In Tooth And Claw," the two drive the trio, which also includes frontwoman Lindsay "Coco" Hames, with a hip approach to a 6/8 garage-rock groove. "The song has this call-and-response thing going on between us," Poni explains. "It's really cool because it leans on a bit of psychedelia as well."

Other tunes, like "Walk Out That Door," come straight off a tavern stage. "That one has a real honky-tonk Southern swagger," Poni says. "That's one of my favorites to play live."

Poni operates a new Kirchhoff Schlagwerk wood kit from Germany with an 18" floor tom and a 24" kick. "It's what works best for this band and our sound," she says. "The boom is amazing."

The drummer brings a spirit and a vibe to the Ettes that's undeniable. "I just want my energy to translate to the audience," Poni says. "I hope they can see how much I love doing what I do and have a good time because of it."

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Poni plays Kirchhoff Schlagwerk drums, including a 14" snare, an 18" floor tom, and a 24" bass drum. Her Sabian cymbals include a 20" AAX Stage ride, a 16" AAX X-Plosion crash, and 14" AAX Stage Hats. She uses Vic Firth 5B sticks and a Tama Iron Cobra Power Glide bass drum pedal.

ASH PEARSON

Old-school metal drumming made new. **3 Inches Of Blood**'s drummer finally gets to let it rip on record.

by Tony Maggliolino

The music of 3 Inches Of Blood shows the clear influence of classic metal acts like Metallica, Iron Maiden, and Manowar, setting the band—which avoids metal clichés such as endless blast beats and mind-numbing 240 bpm tempos—somewhat apart from the majority of its peers. But 3 Inches is no less intense for its throwback approach. *Here Waits Thy Doom*, the group's latest album, is a collection of galloping guitar riffs combined with double bass precision and the ferociously accurate Moeller technique–trained hands of Ash Pearson.

Since 2007 Pearson has been the man on the throne for 3 Inches, which formed in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1999. "To be honest," Ash says, "I didn't really like their music before I joined. I'd played gigs with them when I was in another band, but it wasn't until I actually joined that I really got into the music."

The marriage between Pearson and his band came about when Ash subbed on some gigs for metal drumming legend Gene Hoglan in the group Just Cause and caught the attention of 3 Inches guitar player Shane Clark. "He knew I was only twenty-one at the time," Pearson says, "but also that I could play a lot of different types of music and that I was able to go out on tour with them in the States. We got together for about a month and practiced the album they were touring on at the time, and the rest is history. It was supposed to be a temporary gig, but I ended up staying. I guess they liked me!"

Here Waits Thy Doom, which was tracked in early 2009 with the legendary Seattle producer Jack Endino, is the first 3 Inches Of Blood recording that Pearson appears on. "We rehearsed for the album five to six days a week," the drummer recalls, "getting everything right. We wanted to go for a real old-school vibe, so we decided to go with Jack. It was *so* old school that I didn't even use a click track; I just played along with Shane and Justin [Hagberg, guitars and vocals]. We also recorded the snare and kick to two-inch tape and the rest to Pro Tools. I think we captured a real live sound very well."

3 Inches Of Blood is known to tour North America and Europe relentlessly throughout the year. "We've played some pretty big shows that have been amazing," Pearson says. "It's weird to think that five years ago I was in high school, cutting class to listen to some of the metal bands that now I get the chance to share the same stage with. Being able to play with bands like Iron Maiden and Slipknot has been awesome. Sometimes it doesn't seem real, but it is, and I take in every moment and enjoy it. I truly feel fortunate."

To watch an exclusive MD *video of Ash Pearson demonstrating his practice routine along with the drum parts to 3 Inches Of Blood's "Call Of The Hammer," go to moderndrummer.com.*

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Pearson plays a Pearl Reference series kit, including a 6½x14 brass snare, 10x12 and 11x14 rack toms, 16x16 and 18x18 floor toms, and two 18x22 bass drums. His Sabian cymbals include 14" HHX Power Hats, a 19" AAX X-Treme China, 19" and 20" HHX X-Plosion crashes, a 20" AAX X-Plosion crash, and a 22" AA Rock ride.

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audio-technica.com

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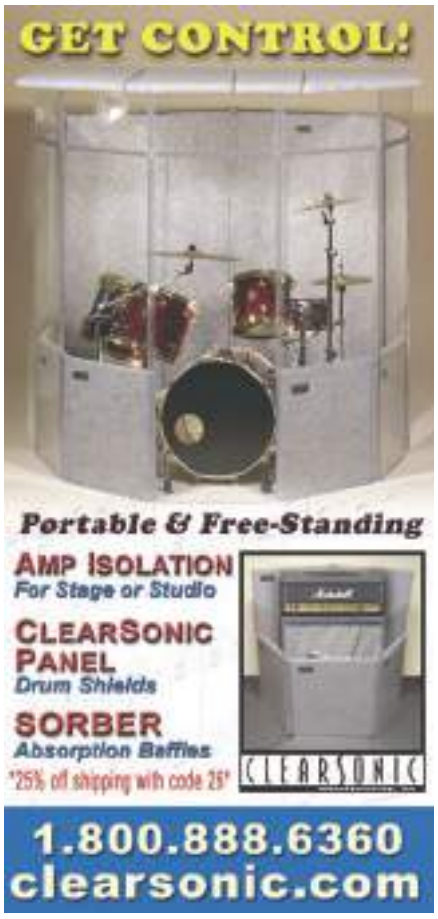
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WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT...?

The Jeff Beck Group, circa 1969: Rod Stewart, Ron Wood, Mickey Waller, Jeff Beck

Michael Ochs Archive/Getty

MICKEY WALLER

The wallop behind **Rod Stewart**'s "Maggie May" and **Jeff Beck**'s "Bolero" was a fixture on London's explosive late-'60s/early-'70s music scene. Yet his name is often glossed over by classic rock historians. Here's what they miss.

by Bob Girouard

Mickey Waller was one of those guys who went about his craft without much fanfare. But, in both a figurative and a literal sense, he carried some mighty big sticks. Waller's untimely passing in April 2008 at age sixty-six left a recorded legacy to be reckoned with. And although his name might have eluded the front pages of rock magazines, evidence of the drummer's enormous abilities can continually be found on classic rock radio.

Starting his career in 1960 with the Flee-Rekkers and concluding decades later with the Mickey Waller All Stars, the drummer had a style all his own. He backed scores of icons, including Sonny Boy Williamson, Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Little Richard, Georgie Fame, Brian Auger, Jimmy Page, John Mayall, Eric Clapton, Paul McCartney, Dusty Springfield, Rod Stewart, Elton John, Jeff Beck, Jimi Hendrix, Ron Wood, and Jack Bruce. He also played with artists as diverse as metal pioneer Leigh Stephens and Tex-Mex star Flaco Jimenez. Moreover, many of the albums Waller played on became legendary unto themselves, including Beck's *Truth* and Stewart's *An Old Raincoat Won't Ever Let You Down*, *Gasoline Alley*, *Every Picture Tells A Story*, and *Never A Dull Moment*.

Although his playing was rooted in jazz, Waller quickly embraced a genre that he would later be regularly associated with, the blues. Capable of handling any musical style, he played an average-size kit, though you'd never know it by listening to his recordings. Waller's sound was fat, even a bit boxy, but the drummer possessed enough muscle to drive any group. According to former bandmate and legendary keyboardist Brian Auger, "When I started the Trinity, I was trying to bridge the gap between jazz and rock, so I was looking for guys who could play jazz but also the R&B stuff. Mickey was one of the few people on the scene who could do that. He had a bass-player friend, Ricky Brown, who he recommended. I tried them out, and they were really great for everything I wanted to do. Generally, around that time all the jazz cats looked upon rock as being rubbish."

Waller's affiliation with Auger lasted roughly two years (1964–66) and gained additional notoriety with their blues band the Steampacket. A very short stint with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers followed, further setting the stage for the most recognizable work of Mickey's career, with Jeff Beck and, later, Rod Stewart.

In 1968 Beck's landmark album *Truth* created a template for the heavy rock genre. The recording represented a forceful convergence of blues and rock, formulating the beginnings of metal. Waller shines throughout, laying down some heavy funk on a remake of the Yardbirds hit "Shapes Of Things" and

"THE WALLER WALLOP" was the name often used to describe Mickey's style. Keyboardist Brian Auger's photographic memory provides us with the all-important stats on one of Waller's earlier drumkits, a 1965 Ludwig Super Classic in pink champagne sparkle: 8x12 rack tom, 16x16 floor tom, 14x22 bass drum, 5x14 Supra-Phonic 400 snare drum.

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getting down and gritty with innovative versions of Willie Dixon's "I Ain't Superstitious" and "You Shook Me." Along the lines of his contemporaries from that period, including Ginger Baker and Mitch Mitchell, Waller plays wide open, spreading rhythms out organically and letting the interplay between him, Beck, and bassist Ron Wood take the songs to new heights.

Hastily cut in '69, the follow-up LP, *Beck-Ola*, embraces a harder sound. Although Mickey is credited on the remastered 2006 version of the album as having played on the bonus track "Sweet Little Angel," the drummer's versatility could possibly have worked against him, as Tony Newman's heavier style permeates the disc. There seemed to be a group identity crisis (commercially speaking), and Beck's appraisal of Waller's being "a Motown-y drummer" might have been a bit short-sighted, especially since Mickey's forthcoming match-up with Rod Stewart would net tremendous success.

Brian Auger further explains Waller's diverse abilities. "He could play any kind of style, groove, or feel," the keyboardist insists. "Heavy, light, or in between. One time I got a call to replace Manfred Mann to do a BBC broadcast with only three days' notice. I tabbed Mickey to do the show, and we discussed the material. Some tunes we knew, some we didn't. He was a study in confidence. I remember we went into the studio [accompanied by Ricky Brown on bass], with only one rehearsal, and we did the entire lot without blinking an eye. In that kind of situation I never had to worry about Mick." On the compilation CD *Auger Rhythms* you can hear the assurance emanating from Waller and his mates on the 1966 performance Auger refers to.

Waller's work with Auger and Beck, as well as a brief foray into theater as musical codirector of the 1969 U.K. production of *Hair*, brought the drummer well-deserved attention. But it was his playing on Rod Stewart's 1969 debut album, *An Old Raincoat Won't Ever Let You Down*—called *The Rod Stewart Album* in the States—that thrust him into prominence. The next Stewart effort,

SWINGING LIKE THE CLAPPERS

FREE/BAD CO. GREAT SIMON KIRKE ON MICKEY WALLER

I met Mickey on a couple of occasions in Barnes in Southwest London, where he used to play at [the Bull's Head] jazz club. He was so underrated. He played a huge part in the burgeoning R&B scene in London in the mid-'60s. I loved his shambolic style…it wasn't tight or precise, but like his contemporary Mitch Mitchell, he combined jazz with R&B and rock. To put it in a nutshell, Mickey swung like the clappers.

I remember one time Free had just finished a gig in the Barnes area and I was walking home. I passed the Bull and popped my head in. There at the bar was Ronnie Wood, Rod Stewart, and Mickey. They were recording in the area and had just finished some tracks on what would become *Truth*, one of the greatest albums *ever* recorded.

Mickey was famous for being able to stretch a pound to infinity, and when he asked Rod what he would like to drink, Rod was so shocked that all he could say was, "Thanks, Mickey, I'll have a vodka and lime. But I'm not going to drink it… I'm taking it home with me to have it framed and put on the mantelpiece!"

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1970's *Gasoline Alley*, further demonstrates Mickey's diversity, with gems like the laid-back "Country Comfort" and the rollicking "Cut Across Shorty."

On the now-classic *Every Picture Tells A Story* (1971), Waller is at the top of his game. His wide-open sound perfectly complements the title track, his New Orleans–influenced break tears up "That's All Right," and his parts play off Stewart's vocals with power and restraint on the infectious hit "Maggie May." Though Kenney Jones's performance on the Temptations cover "(I Know) I'm Losing You" is a highlight of *Every Picture*, Mickey's playing on the rest of the album is hugely memorable.

Hot on the heels of that record came 1972's *Never A Dull Moment*. Waller continues to be all over it, with a rendition of Jimi Hendrix's "Angel" that is simply perfect; the term *power ballad* could have been coined for that track. And the drummer's Brit-style shuffle on the Sam Cooke classic "Twistin' The Night Away" rocks the song silly and still holds up today. Drumming icon Carmine Appice, who would see fame with Stewart later in the decade, offers his own take on that period: "I love Mickey's playing. He had a cool style, a seemingly lazy, behind-the-beat groove. When I worked with Rod, every night I played 'Maggie May' I had to think about pulling the groove back to play it like Mickey."

Post-Stewart projects of Waller's include a U.S. tour with Long John Baldry and a "metal merger" of sorts, as Mickey played in the band Pilot with Blue Cheer guitarist Leigh Stephens. Releases were *Pilot* (1972) and *Point Of View* (1973). In the early '80s Waller teamed with Dick Heckstall-Smith and Bob Brunning in the De Luxe Blues Band. Stints with Terry Smith and with Tony Ashton followed, plus some odd but fun projects such as the Rocket 88 big band led by the Rolling Stones' Charlie Watts. Waller also rejoined Georgie Fame for some shows and did a European tour with Chuck Berry. And there was that adventurous coupling with the famed Tex-Mex accordionist Flaco Jimenez, with Mickey becoming part of Jimenez's Grammy-winning band in the mid-'80s.

After doing a recording session with Paul McCartney in 1998, Waller settled in at a few small London venues, like the Eel Pie Club and the Bull's Head, holding court and jamming occasionally with some of the greats he'd worked with throughout the years. In an unexpected but impressive move, Mickey also took some courses in law, eventually recouping royalty omissions from his Rod Stewart days.

Brian Auger offers a few final thoughts: "Mickey was a complex personality. He could be funny one minute, sullen and introspective the next. He was mainly happy when he was playing music, and above all his saving grace was that he was a musician and he played really good. With his technique, he kicked the groove in the backside. As the years went on and we got older, we got closer as people. I looked on him as both a great friend and a phenomenal drummer. He didn't get the kind of recognition that he should have gotten."

Thanks to Brian Auger, Simon Kirke, and Carmine Appice for their contributions to this story.

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THE DRUMMERS OF TORTOISE

JOHN McENTIRE

JOHN HERNDON

DAN BITNEY

AFTER NEARLY TWENTY YEARS ON THE SCENE IT HELPED CREATE, TORTOISE—AND ITS *THREE* DRUMMERS—CONTINUES TO PUSH SONIC BOUNDARIES AND RHYTHMIC INVENTIVENESS. JUST DON'T BLINK, OR THE BAND WILL BE ON TO SOMETHING ELSE.

Story by Ilya Stemkovsky • Photos by Gene Ambo

How do you even begin to describe the jazz/rock/ambient amalgamation that is Tortoise? Formed in the early '90s, the band is credited with originating and perpetuating an esoteric, postmodern rock aesthetic able to please indie hipsters, jazz fans, and lovers of avant noise alike.

Spurred on by Chicago's fertile experimental music scene, Tortoise released its acclaimed self-titled debut in 1994. It's an instrumental "post rock" excursion into hazy beats, electronic throb, and interlocking rhythms supplied by multiple basses and drumkits. The next fifteen years found the band further developing its signature sound, infusing its records and live performances with elements of progressive rock, jazz, dub, and minimalism, all while expanding its sonic pallet with vibraphone and keyboards.

The drummers of Tortoise—John McEntire, John Herndon, and Dan Bitney—create a sinuous rhythmic texture that is satisfying yet challenging. With two kits in the group's live setup, the possibilities are vast. Two might drum while another plays vibes. One might play time while another colors and the third lays out. Orchestrating up to three lines of percussion and mixing them with guitar and bass might sound like a formula for disaster, but among these drummers' talents is knowing exactly what (and when) *not* to play.

Tortoise's sometimes arm-length coolness and diffuse approach aren't going to be everyone's cup of tea. But a closer examination reveals emotionally resonant songwriting and an attention to arranging detail informed by the band members' acute awareness of their surroundings. Is that a spaghetti western film score? Was that a samba with brush overdubs coming out of both speakers? That sounds like the glitch of a record's lock groove, but is it made by a drum machine or a mallet on a tin can?

"I used to have these parameters for the ideas I would bring to Tortoise," Bitney says. "But recently those gates of what we feel is appropriate have opened up. There's a lot more diversity, and it's represented with drumming."

Outside the band, McEntire, Herndon, and Bitney recently collaborated on Bumps, a breakbeat side project whose self-titled album showcases their considerable drumming proficiency and also McEntire's producing skills. (John runs his own recording studio and is an in-demand producer and mixer for artists including Stereolab and Bright Eyes.) Tortoise's latest album, the alarmingly aggressive *Beacons Of Ancestorship*, is filled with dancehall reggae grooves, funky backbeats, and punkish blasts, all sure to inspire the next generation to discover the unique world of this progressive collective. *MD* spoke with all of the Tortoise drummers and got the scoop on why three's a charm.

MD: What are the specific challenges of having more than one kit on the records and on stage?

McEntire: It's not really a challenge, because usually on things with more than one kit, we're writing with that in mind and creating parts with lines that interweave to create an overall texture. Sometimes we'll play in unison, but usually the parts are written and recorded so two parts can be heard as one.

Herndon: The ultimate challenge when you're playing with another drummer is to have it sound musical and to have the part be appropriate to the song. There's a song we do called "Monica" [from 2001's *Standards*], and the feeling of sitting inside the pattern with Bitney is so fun, I feel like I can just sit there all day rocking that groove. So I welcome that challenge.

Bitney: When you're making a record, you're just going for what you can find as far as sounds—like a snare drum played three times, overdubbing the same pattern. You throw it to the wind. Then when it comes time to rehearse, you have to learn to play these parts *and* other people's parts, because someone might be busy doing something else. It's a weird band in that respect. Live, we don't have five different kits on stage to replicate the drums we use in the studio. We have to simplify it.

MD: Are there discussions about roles?

Bitney: Well, people will throw ideas at you. For the song "Crest" [on 2004's *It's All Around You*] I asked Herndon, "Leave the first verse orchestral—don't bring a beat in yet." Or [guitarist] Jeff Parker will bring in a programmed beat, and McEntire will replicate it with the vision Jeff had.

Herndon: Sometimes people will make suggestions on ways to improve a part, or something will be deleted. The drumming is super-democratic in terms of the decisions about who will play what. When we're recording and someone is trying a part and they're not getting it, they'll just pass it over.

McEntire: It's actually pretty random.

McEntire, Herndon, and Bitney soundcheck before a February 10, 2010, gig at Lincoln Hall in Chicago.

It's a long process, and we go through a lot of permutations of people playing different things to figure out who's got the best feel for a particular part.

MD: The timbral choices—such as one drummer playing with sticks and another using brushes—is that predetermined or improvised?

Herndon: There's not a lot of room in Tortoise for improvising, so basically we play our parts as if we're in any other kind of rock band. Sometimes we'll stretch a part, and sometimes live versions will be slightly altered from the recorded versions.

Bitney: Nobody has this huge ego. Someone will take a pass on the drums and come into the control room and say, "That sucked." Nobody really elbows into songs. We also never really employ the concept of one person having the beat and the other doing fills. My ideas are interlocking. In my compositions I like to split up the kits in the pattern, and in other songs the guys will trade verses and choruses, like on "Swung From The Gutters," from [1998's] *TNT*.

MD: How are the songs written? Is there much rehearsal-space jamming?

McEntire: There's really not that much at all. There was a time several years ago when we tried to do more of that, but we've abandoned that process. Nowadays people will bring ideas into the studio and we'll develop them individually or collectively. The jamming quotient has gone way down.

MD: What's an example of one drummer writing a part for another to play?

Bitney: There's a song on the new album called "High Class Slim Came Floatin' In." Herndon wrote that. To me it's the weirdest beat ever: 16th notes on the snare instead of a cymbal, no bass drum on the 1. I would never even think to play that. We all took passes on it, and the recorded version is a mix of all of us playing at different times.

Herndon: On "High Class" I had a drum part worked out, but I thought it would be best if I just played synthesizer. Bitney played the beat I had written, but it wasn't the same feel as my demo. So I went and recorded the first part with the brushes, and Bitney played the middle part. Live, Bitney will play the kit through the whole song.

MD: Is any one of you a gearhead? Do you collect vintage drums or cymbals?

Herndon: When I have the bread, I do!

TORTOISE DRUMS

JOHN McENTIRE

DRUMS: C&C Custom in natural matte finish, including a $6\frac{1}{2}$x14 snare, an 8x12 rack tom, a 14x14 floor tom, and a 16x20 bass drum

CYMBALS: Bosphorus, including a 20" Gold ride, 13" Antique hi-hats, and a 17" Traditional crash

HARDWARE: DW, primarily 6000 series, with a 5000ND3 bass drum pedal

STICKS: Vater Power 2B wood-tip

HEADS: Remo Emperor X snare batter and Hazy Emperor bottom, Remo coated Emperor tom batters and clear Ambassador bottoms, Aquarian Super-Kick II bass drum batter and Remo Smooth White Ambassador front head

DAN BITNEY

DRUMS: Ludwig Big Beat in psychedelic red, including an 8x12 tom, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 14x20 bass drum; Ludwig $6\frac{1}{2}$x14 Super-Sensitive snare

CYMBALS: Zildjian, including 14" K Constantinople hi-hats, a 20" K Constantinople Light ride, and a 22" A ride; Istanbul 16" Medium Thin crash

HARDWARE: Ludwig Speed King bass drum pedal, DW 6500 flush-base hi-hat stand, old Ludwig pencil stand, old Tama cymbal stand

STICKS: Vic Firth American Classic 8D sticks and T4 mallets, Regal Tip Classic brushes

HEADS: Remo, including coated Ambassador snare batter and Hazy Emperor bottom, coated Ambassador tom batters and clear Diplomat bottoms, and Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter and Emperor front head

JOHN HERNDON

DRUMS: C&C Custom, including an 8x12 tom, a 14x14 floor tom, and a 16x18 bass drum; Slingerland 5x14 1920s brass snare ("Sometimes I'll include an 8x10 or 9x13 tom," Herndon says, "and sometimes I switch to a 14x24 bass drum, depending on how tall I feel")

CYMBALS: Istanbul Agop, including a 24" Traditional ride, a 20" Traditional crash, and 14" Mel Lewis hi-hats; Keplinger 20" stainless steel cymbal

HARDWARE: old Ludwig flat-base cymbal stands, DW cymbal arm mounted to the bass drum, Yamaha HS650 single-braced hi-hat stand, DW5000 bass drum pedal with nylon strap, old Pearl single-braced snare stand

STICKS: Bopworks Savoy Jazz and Birdland models; Regal Tip 7A; Vic Firth 8D, 5A, or 5B ("I like to switch it up—I'm not super-picky")

HEADS: Remo coated Ambassador snare and tom batters, Remo coated Emperor or Aquarian coated Super-Kick bass drum batter and Remo coated Ambassador front head

[laughs] I have an old Simmons SDS-1 that I like. I've purchased a few Synare drum synths. They're cool because they have two oscillators that you can play off each other.

McEntire: I'm not much of a drum collector, though I certainly appreciate the finer pieces out there. I'm pretty happy with my equipment, and most of it is modern. We have a deal with C&C, so we have some of their stuff. I have a '60s Gretsch round-badge set and a '60s Ludwig, but I guess I put more of that energy into studio equipment and synthesizers.

MD: Live, there are two kits set up: Herndon's and McEntire's. Bitney is the floater. How does that work?

Bitney: I do different tunes on different kits, which is a challenge because of snare heights and things like that. McEntire has more of a rock tone—more dead toms, bigger bass drum. Herndon has more of an open-tuned jazz kit. I always joke that I'm going to bring my own kit. But it wouldn't work; it wouldn't fit [on stage] either. And both kits face each other near the front of the stage. It's the perfect answer to our stage plot. At some of the smaller clubs, people can reach out and mute your cymbal or steal your sticks if you're not looking. It's a pretty great experience for drummers—very different from the regular rock setup.

MD: How have the side projects influenced Tortoise?

McEntire: There's a sphere of influence that everything has when you're working on multiple things at the same time. It's not necessarily direct, but you have different ideas floating around in your head, and which project you decide to apply them to can sometimes be arbitrary. It's interesting to see how that cross-pollination works.

Herndon: I was playing drums with Prefuse 73 [Guillermo Scott Herren] as part of his live set. He's also the guy behind Savath & Savalas, and I played live drums on one of those records. He was the one who said we should make a breakbeat record, *Bumps*.

MD: Was that project fun?

Bitney: Yeah, we were approached by Stones Throw Records to make a drum

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album. We all brought a bunch of ideas. It was really fun kind of thinking of dance music. I'd think of songs and mutate the drum parts—songs that I wish I had just drum edits of.

McEntire: It's interesting to spend that much time working on something so specific, to tweak things with the idea that they can be used as production material for somebody else's project. When we finished that we thought, *This could be the new direction for Tortoise*. Just that super-minimal, really banging stuff.

Bitney: I also play a lot of improv gigs. But they're not necessarily jazz gigs. You can practice at home, but having a weekly gig where you have to make up two hours of music makes you *so* much better. I also played in a blues band and had to learn all these shuffles, which was a great lesson.

MD: *Beacons Of Ancestorship* is more aggressive than the last album, *It's All Around You*. Was it a conscious decision to have no mallets this time?

Herndon: We definitely wanted to leave the mallets off. I don't have a set of vibes at my place, so I can't practice. I also don't have the facility I wish I had. I can play parts, but I don't have the vocabulary on the instrument. So I just felt much more comfortable on the drums. I also had this beautiful Moog Voyager synthesizer that I wanted to get into. Parts I would have played on the vibes before, I'm now playing on the synthesizer because it's more interesting to me.

Bitney: It's the long arc of Tortoise. The first few records had this minimalism, these layered vibraphones, and we still appreciate that music. But recently there's been a shift to more beat-heavy stuff. And, you know, drummers writing songs! [laughs] There's an explanation there. Usually the drummer isn't involved besides picking a pattern and choosing the fills.

McEntire: It was an unspoken desire to mix things up. Since it had been so long since our last one, we didn't want it to be "just another Tortoise record." We went for a heavier sound, just trying to push things. And that really was the best way to differentiate it from previous work.

MD: "Northern Something" and "Gigantes," both from *Beacons*, have elements of dancehall reggae and samba.

Bitney: Those are ideas left over from the Bumps project. "Gigantes" is basically a samba pattern, taking the surdo part and splitting it between the bass drums of the two kits. One person is rocking the hi-hats and the bass drum, and I'm throwing in the snares and the other quarter-note hi-hat. I wrote them on my computer and showed the guys, then we spent a few hours playing them, bouncing ideas off one another.

"Northern Something" was kind of a Charleston beat at first, and I couldn't see kids feeling that beat. So I changed it to the dancehall rhythm, and then Herndon had this sampled 808 bass drum, which he played on his keyboard, and it ended up being this abstract bass line. He also had an idea to double on a snare drum what those resonant frequencies were doing. It ended up being this second-line dancehall thing.

McEntire: That dancehall beat was so obvious but just so right, so you couldn't do anything else.

MD: "Charteroak Foundation" has an angular 12/8 arpeggiated guitar against a straighter beat. Do you guys work on getting adept at interconnecting rhythms?

McEntire: That's a tune Jeff had, based on a sample he had from those leaked Bonham drum tracks from *In Through The Out Door*. He put this 12/8 guitar thing over it. It was like two separate things at once. It was really unsettled, and you could hear it in a bunch of different ways. We try to do polymetric stuff—give the listener a chance to hear downbeats in different places. The complexities of the rhythm can suggest different things in terms of meter or where the beat should fall.

For more with John McEntire, John Herndon, and Dan Bitney, go to moderndrummer.com.

RECORDINGS

JOHN McENTIRE

Tortoise Beacons Of Ancestorship, Standards, Millions Now Living Will Never Die /// **The Sea And Cake** The Biz, Oui, Car Alarm /// **Bastro** Sing The Troubled Beast /// **Gastr Del Sol** Mirror Repair /// **The Red Krayola** Hazel /// **David Grubbs** The Spectrum Between

DAN BITNEY

Tortoise all /// **Tar Babies** Face The Music/Respect Your Nightmares, Fried Milk, No Contest, Honey Bubble, Death Trip /// **Isotope 217** The Unstable Molecule, Utonian Automatic /// **Bumps** Bumps

JOHN HERNDON

Tortoise all /// **Bill Dixon With Exploding Star Orchestra** Bill Dixon With Exploding Star Orchestra /// **Exploding Star Orchestra** We Are All From Somewhere Else /// **Powerhouse Sound** Oslo/Chicago: Breaks /// **Rob Mazurek Quintet** Sound Is /// **Isotope 217** all /// **Poster Children** Tool Of The Man /// **Five Style** Five Style /// **The For Carnation** Fight Songs /// **Bumps** Bumps

FAVES

JOHN McENTIRE

This Heat Deceit (Charles Hayward) /// **David Axelrod** Songs Of Experience (Earl Palmer) /// **AMM** Combine And Laminates (Eddie Prévost) /// **Can** Ege Bamyasi (Jaki Liebezeit) /// **Fela Kuti** Zombie (Tony Allen) /// **Sonny Sharrock** Ask The Ages (Elvin Jones) /// **Neu!** Neu! (Klaus Dinger) /// **Fritz Hauser** Solodrumming (Fritz Hauser) /// **Arnold Dreyblatt** Animal Magnetism (Pierre Berthet) /// **Iannis Xenakis** La Légende D'Eer (no drummer)

DAN BITNEY

James Brown In The Jungle Groove (Clyde Stubblefield) /// **Eddie Bo** The Hook And Sling (James Black) /// **Fela Kuti** Sorrow Tears And Blood (Tony Allen) /// **Sonny Sharrock** Ask The Ages (Elvin Jones) /// **Chicago Underground Trio** Possible Cube (Chad Taylor) /// **Alice Coltrane** Universal Consciousness (Jack DeJohnette) /// **Ornette Coleman** The Shape Of Jazz To Come (Ed Blackwell) /// **Devo** Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo! (Alan Myers) /// **Moondog** More Moondog/The Story Of Moondog (Moondog) /// **Black Sabbath** Paranoid (Bill Ward)

JOHN HERNDON

Burning Spear Marcus Garvey (Leroy "Horsemouth" Wallace) /// **Sly & The Family Stone** Fresh (Andy Newmark) /// **This Heat** Health And Efficiency (Charles Hayward) /// **Fela Kuti** Zombie (Tony Allen) /// **Bad Brains** ROIR Cassette (Earl Hudson) /// **Miles Davis** Nefertiti (Tony Williams) /// **Devo** Duty Now For The Future (Alan Myers) /// **Sonny Sharrock** Ask The Ages (Elvin Jones) /// **Ornette Coleman** Body Meta (Ronald Shannon Jackson) /// **Arthur Verocai** Arthur Verocai (Robertinho Silva, Pascoal Meirelles) /// **Captain Beefheart And The Magic Band** Doc At The Radar Station (John "Drumbo" French, Robert Williams) /// **Milford Graves** Grand Unification (Milford Graves) /// **Donny Hathaway** Donny Hathaway Live (Fred White)

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RECORDINGS

★★★★☆

PHILLY JOE JONES DAMERONIA

An invaluable reissue with excellent (and copious) liner notes and rare, revealing photographs, Philly Joe Jones' *Dameronia* is also a terrific document of the drummer circa 1983, playing in a controlled manner that belies his rep as a wild man blowing out rudiments like some incensed drum corps fanatic. Tadd Dameron's sophisticated material is the reason; it has Jones flexing his muscular chops in the most musical of settings. Such classic Dameron tracks as "Our Delight" find Jones playing with the same illustrative mastery as heard on Miles Davis's *Milestones* or *Workin'*, but with a subdued flair that's pure drumming poetry. (Uptown) **Ken Micallef**

★★★½☆

THE NELS CLINE SINGERS INITIATE

Thinking man's guitarist Nels Cline (Wilco) leads his band on this abstract yet rocking double-disc live/studio set. Bay Area drummer **SCOTT AMENDOLA** packs quite a punch on the kit and also plays with a restrained lyricism through his use of electronics and loops. The studio disc's visceral, post-rock tom dirge during "Mercy (Procession)" leads to a gentle coda, while the live disc, from a September 2009 San Francisco gig, juxtaposes crashing noise, free jazz, and Amendola's madman swing during "Fly Fly." Later, the rolling crash and tumble of "Sunken Song" reveals a drummer definitely not playing it safe. (Cryptogramophone) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

★★★★☆

JOEY DeFRANCESCO SNAPSHOT

There's a lot to be said for improvising musicians who play together often as a band. B-3 organ burner DeFrancesco's latest release showcases his original trio, which has logged some fifteen years together, and drummer **BYRON LANDHAM** has actually been backing Joey D. for some twenty years now. Throughout this live recording, Landham's ability to anticipate, prod, push, and pull the group is exemplary. What's even more notable is the comfort among the group members, which allows a level of interplay that isn't often achieved or even attempted in groups assembled for a session. In all, a great organ trio record. (HighNote) **Martin Patmos**

STAFF FAVES

THIS MONTH: EDITORIAL DIRECTOR ADAM BUDOFSKY

THE FALL YOUR FUTURE OUR CLUTTER

The Fall is among the most revered of the original batch of British post-punk art rockers, along with bands like the Mekons, Gang Of Four, Wire, and Public Image Ltd. In leader Mark E. Smith the Fall has a vocalist who is as likely to repel as he is to inspire, sing-speaking his lyrics with an acidic edge and a loose relationship with key. The music, though occasionally abrasive and demanding, often comes in the form of slamming, droney garage rock that inevitably reaches grand heights of intensity.

Though Smith has rearranged the Fall's lineup many times over the years, an intense swagger has rarely been absent from the rhythm section, and the band's latest incarnation, featuring drummer **KEIRON MELLING**, certainly brings it. *Your Future Our Clutter*'s leadoff track, "O.F.Y.C. Showcase," is a typically barn-burning haul of a trip. Melling's unstoppable kit slugging is pure joy and doesn't let up for a millisecond of the song's nearly six-minute length. After an awkward intro, "Bury Pts. 1 & 3" kicks into high gear with a long, clean double-time snare fill, suggesting that Melling is capable of more than we might have assumed. From there he takes varied approaches to the album's driving, single-minded workouts, from the snare march of "Cowboy George" to the punk shuffle of "Hot Cake" to the vertical, stuttery approach on "Y.F.O.C./Slippy Floor." Though *Your Future Our Clutter* never quite gets back to the intensity of the leadoff track, taken as a whole it's a pretty exciting ride.

ENCORE

by Patrick Berkery

FREE
FREE FOREVER (DVD)

As peddlers of amplified rhythm and blues from the early '70s go, few were leaner or meaner than Free. Certainly none were funkier, thanks to the fuzz-caked bass of Andy Fraser (his part on "Mr. Big" is so nasty it sounds like it has hair on it), which fit perfectly into the spacious pockets Simon Kirke created with heavy quarter notes on the hi-hats and his simple, sturdy approach to playing a groove. This double DVD collection of live television performances and a blazing set from 1970's Isle Of Wight festival is a testament to Free's stripped-bare blues power and Kirke's might on the bottom end. Playing a George Hayman kit, Kirke establishes the swampy gait of "Fire And Water" and never lets it go, even during exaggeratedly long fills. And while four takes of "All Right Now" and three of "Mr. Big" might seem like overkill, the drummer offers something different on each, in tempo, feel, and fills. (Eagle Rock)

SIMON KIRKE REMINISCES ABOUT HIS DAYS IN FREE

You played Isle Of Wight with just a few mics on the kit and no monitors. That seems insane by today's standards.

Playing those huge places, you just concentrated on what you were playing and let the mics do the work. Don't worry about reaching 500 yards away. That's up to the front-of-house guys. When Free came into America, our first gig was Madison Square Garden opening for Delaney & Bonnie and Blind Faith. For the first few shows I was playing to the back of the hall, clobbering the drums and pitting the skins. Then Jim Keltner said, "Just let the microphones do the work. Don't worry about playing to the ninety-ninth row. Play with the band, and it'll all come together."

Free's minimal approach worked on the primitive sound systems of the day.

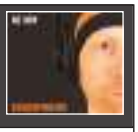
We learned to play in a balanced fashion and listen out for each other. If we got too loud, we had to make faces to each other and say bring it down a bit. There was a lot of eye contact made, particularly between [guitarist] Paul Kossoff and me.

You were a pretty funky player, especially for a young lad.

And who would've thought a nineteen-year-old white kid from England capable of that? [laughs] My style was busier initially. Then I got turned on to Al Jackson, and he just blew me away. I knew that's what I wanted to sound like. I consciously tried to play more stripped down and solid, like him.

FUSION SHORT TAKES

by Will Romano



OZ NOY, WAYNE KRANTZ, HOLDSWORTH/PASQUA/ HASLIP/WACKERMAN

On guitarist Oz Noy's *Schizophrenic*, **KEITH CARLOCK** (Sting, Steely Dan) knows how to bring the funk while subtly taking command ("Ice Pick"), while **DAVE WECKL** (Mike Stern, Chick Corea) proves odd-time phrasing can be noninvasive ("Seven") and **ANTON FIG**, with Carlock, demonstrates the art of playing well with others ("120 Heart Beats" and "Schizophrenic"). (Magnatude)

On guitarist Wayne Krantz's recent collaboration with Carlock and bassist Tim Lefebvre, *Krantz Carlock Lefebvre*, the drum sounds are as memorable as the groove ("Wine Is The Thread" and "War-Torn Johnny"), highlighting that *other* important way of complementing the music. (Abstract Logix)

On the Tony Williams homage *Blues For Tony*, featuring Allan Holdsworth, Alan Pasqua, Jimmy Haslip, and **CHAD WACKERMAN**, longtime Holdsworth cohort and Zappa alumnus Wackerman impresses with his ability to entertain while conducting R&D, in the form of the syncopated and exploratory drum solo on the title track. (Moonjune)

MULTIMEDIA

DRUM ATLAS SERIES

★★★★½

JAMAICA BY PETE SWEENEY

★★★★★

BRAZIL BY PETE SWEENEY

BOOK/CDs LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE $16.95 each

Jamaican music finally gets full-blown coverage in the fourth book of the *Drum Atlas Series*. Beginning with traditional Nyabinghi drumming, the book traces Jamaica's music from mento, through ska, and to rocksteady, reggae, and beyond. The chapter on ska really sets things up, demonstrating the drummer's role as well as how bass and guitar lock in. This depth helps provide a real understanding of how and why reggae works when the three-drop, steppers beat, fills, and more are explored. With contributions of drummers like Sly Dunbar and Stewart Copeland, mention of more electronic forms (dub, dancehall, ragga), and clear examples throughout, this book is simply outstanding.

Brazil is the fifth culture to inspire a book in the *Drum Atlas Series*, and like its predecessors, this package provides a ground-up approach aimed at understanding each of the country's rhythmic styles. Focusing especially on the samba, Sweeney provides a step-by-step approach to mastering the feel, exploring how samba works when making use of cross-sticking, the floor tom, brushes, cowbell, and so forth. The chapter on bossa nova introduces the feel and explains brush patterns. With baiao and several lesser-known regional styles rounding out the book, *Brazil* is a nice addition to the series. (Alfred) **Martin Patmos**

★★★★½

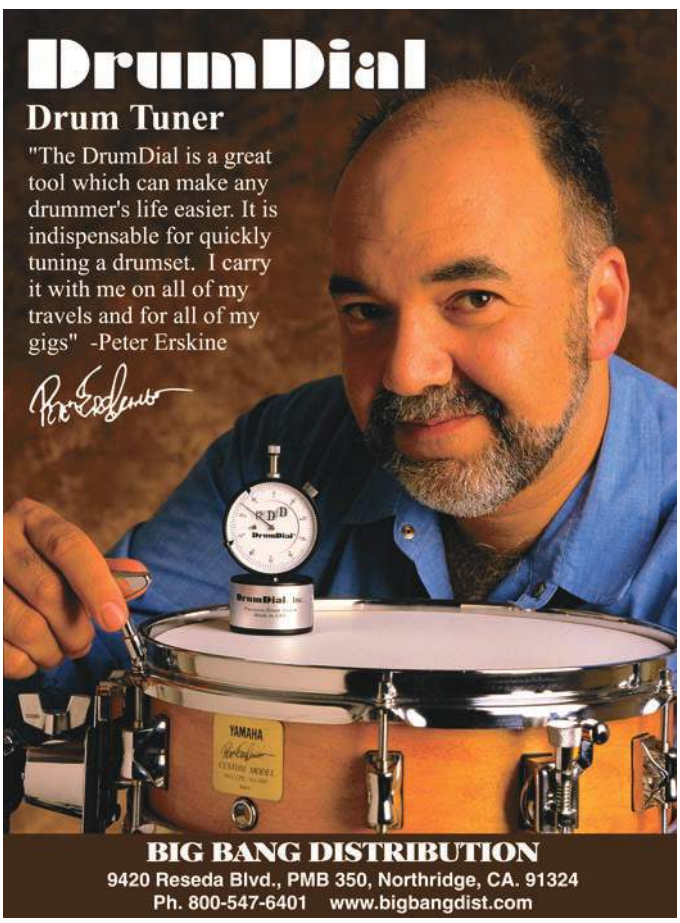
DEREK RODDY

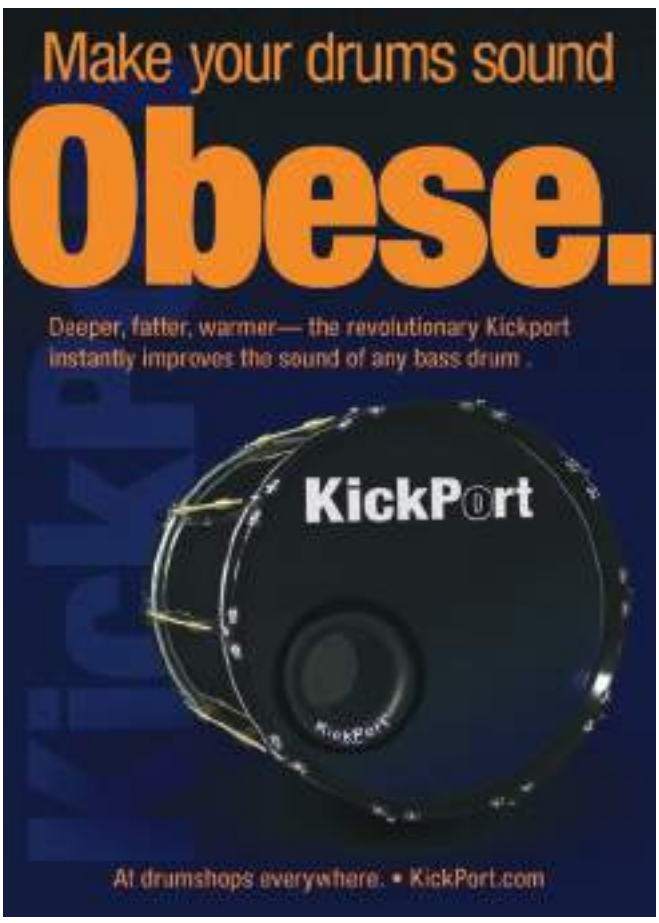
BLAST BEATS EVOLVED

DVD LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED $29.95

Extreme metal drumming may often be dismissed as a triumph of form over substance. Drummers like Derek Roddy, however, are using instructional formats such as clinics and DVDs to demonstrate the masterful technique required to partake in this style of music. Here Roddy does a great job of explaining and demonstrating the evolution of the rhythmic staple of extreme metal: the blast beat. Whether or not the viewer is a fan of this drumming technique, he or she can pick up some valuable conditioning exercises and advice on how to incorporate blast beats into different styles of music, as well as how to get creative with blast beats and fills within the genre of extreme metal.

At just under three hours, the video finds Roddy packing in ten exercises, explanations and demonstrations, five solos, and seven play-alongs with his own instrumental project Serpents Rise; there's even a cameo freehand blast demonstration by Johnny Rabb. Where the DVD falls short is that Roddy's exercises are about learning by rote more than understanding how he developed his technique. For someone with such amazing footwork, he doesn't go into detail about his foot technique, which is often a critical insight to learning how to achieve and maintain such brutal speeds. The best part of *Blast Beats Evolved* is that Roddy presents the extreme metal genre and drumming in a format that's nonabrasive, so that drummers checking out the style for the first time will find the DVD accessible and informative. (Hudson) **David Ciauro**





An unexpected highlight of the Jim Chapin Memorial Scholarship concert was a duet between R&B great Bernard Purdie and rock god Carmine Appice.

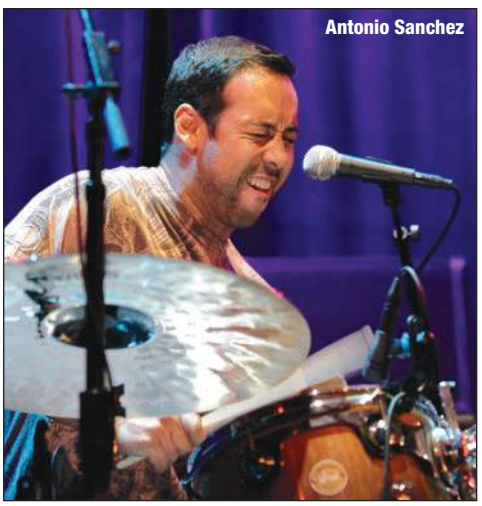
JIM CHAPIN TEACHER SCHOLARSHIP LAUNCHED IN NYC

This past February 17, the Jim Chapin Memorial Teacher Scholarship's inaugural event was held at the Hard Rock Cafe in New York City's Times Square. The evening celebrated the legacy of drummer, teacher, and author Jim Chapin, one of the drumming world's most dedicated and influential legends, who passed on July 4, 2009, at age eighty-nine. Hosting the show was drummer and longtime friend of Chapin's Dom Famularo. Well over 500 people were in attendance, including friends, family members, and special guests.

The long list of drummers who played and/or spoke includes Carmine Appice, Sergio Bellotti, Aaron Comess, Anton Fig, Steve Gadd, Jojo Mayer, Joe Morello, Dafnis Prieto, Bernard Purdie, Jay Weinberg, Antonio Sanchez, Frank Bellucci, and Sam Ulano. Messages were read from drummers who couldn't attend, including Billy Cobham, Steve Smith, Billy Ward, and Max Weinberg. A number of industry folks had the opportunity to reminisce about Chapin, including Mike Ehrhard (longtime teacher at Drum Headquarters in St. Louis and a student of Jim's for more than twenty years), Art Benson of Dynamic Percussion in Connecticut, and me. And the Chapin Family, including many of Jim's kids and grandkids, played touching renditions of Jim's original songs, led by sons Tom and Steve and supported by musicians that have backed Tom and the late Harry Chapin over the years.

The Jim Chapin Memorial Teacher Scholarship, which will be given annually, is maintained by the Percussive Arts Society. For more information and to donate to the fund, go to pas.org.

Text by Rob Birenbaum
Photos by Paul La Raia



Antonio Sanchez

Steve Gadd

Aaron Comess

Dafnis Prieto

DRUMMERS FOR HAITI

This past February 28, five world-class drumming clinicians gathered at the New Jersey School Of Percussion in West Orange to raise funds for the American Red Cross's Haiti relief effort. The roster included big band/Broadway drummer/educator Tommy Igoe, Drummers Collective faculty members Jason Gianni and Peter Retzlaff, Grammy-nominated session drummer/producer Ron Thaler, and PAS New Jersey Chapter president Glenn Weber. The event featured impressive drum soloing—some of which contained traditional Haitian rhythms—and play-alongs, engaging Q&A sessions on the psychological aspects of performing, demonstrations of Igoe's Lifetime Warm-Up, presentations on the importance and intricacies of sound and feel, a polyrhythmic workshop, and a discussion of the nature of creativity.

If you'd like to donate to the relief effort, visit drummersforhaiti.com or redcross.org.

Text by Christopher Golinski

Sam Ulban and Heather Quercio

Event organizer Christopher Golinski, Peter Retzlaff, Tommy Igoe, Glenn Weber, Ron Thaler, Jason Gianni

WHO'S PLAYING WHAT

Joining the Zildjian artist roaster are **Mike Byrne** (Smashing Pumpkins), **Tony Allen**, **Torstein Lofthus**, **Akiko Matsuura** (the Big Pink), **Creighton Barrett** (Band Of Horses), **Matt Billingslea** (Lady Antebellum), **Chris Bussey** (TrioVD), **Joe Clegg** (Ellie Goulding), **Aicha Djidjelli** (Daisy Dares You), **Toby Dundas** (the Temper Trap), **Zac Farro** (Paramore), **Justin Faulkner** (Branford Marsalis), **Jonathan Gaskin** (My Passion), **Liza Holbrook** (SHEL), **Ben Jolliffe** (Young Guns), **Mike Kaabe** (Emmure), **Ben Kennedy** (Ladyhawke), **Pat Kirch** (the Maine), **Gregg Lohman** (Kellie Pickler), **Ian Matthews** (Kasabian), **Rolando Morales-Matos** (Ron Carter's Foursight Quartet, Birdland Big Band, *The Lion King*), **Ulysses Owens** (Christian McBride, Kurt Elling), **Suren de Saram** (Bombay Bicycle Club), **Kendrick Scott** (John Scofield), **Dan Searle** (Architects), **Seamus Simon** (Paolo Nutini), **Sean Skeete** (Berklee College Of Music), **Michael Spearman** (Everything Everything), **Sebastian Sternberg** (Marina & the Diamonds), **Ron Stewart** (Johnny A.), **Eddie Tuduri** (TRAP), and **Frank Zummo** (Street Drum Corps). New Zildjian drumstick artists include **Tony Allen**, **Juan Escovedo**, **Toby Dundas**, and **Ben Gordon** (Parkway Drive).

WHO'S PLAYING WHAT CONTINUED

Sonor has added **Sallaberry** and **Joe Babiak** to its list of endorsers.

Pearl artists include **Ray Luzier** (Korn), **Mike Alonso** (Electric Six), **Nic Ritter** (Warbringer), **Ryan Shutler** (Lazarus A.D.), **Doug Rogells** (Envy On The Coast), and **Mike Ranne** (Through The Eyes Of The Dead). The **Concord Blue Devils** are the newest members of Pearl's Drum Corps International roster, and Blue Devils percussion director **Scott Johnson** has joined Pearl's list of artists and educators.

Now part of the Vater artist roster are **Will Denton** (LeAnn Rimes), **Tommy Benedetti** (John Brown's Body), **Erick Ballard** (Bernard Allison), **Nick Price** (Meg & Dia), **Chad La Roy** (Cavo), **Steven Padin** (Jessie James), **Ryan Carman** (Rocco DeLuca & the Burden), **Adam Silverman** (33Miles), **Ryan Leger** (Every Time I Die), **Jeral "Scooter" Gray** (Keyshia Cole), **Jerry Meadows** (Papercut Massacre), **Matt McFadden** (After Edmund), **Jess Bowen** (the Summer Set), **Derek Davis** (Big D & the Kids Table), **Andrew Wetzel** (Attack Attack!), **Johnny Stubblefield** (Parachute), **Josh Baird** (Broadway Calls), **Emmett Menke** (Polar Bear Club), **Danny Taylor** (*Legally Blonde* tour), **Dagan Thogerson** (Murder By Death), **Mike Byrne** (Smashing Pumpkins), **Greg Garrity** (Anarbor), **Ray LeVier** (independent), **Aaron Flora** (Hellogoodbye), **Nate Smith** (Dave Holland), **Nicky Bomba** (John Butler Trio), **Matt Strmiska** (Black Joe Lewis & the Honeybears), **Darius Fentress** (Fred Hammond), **Joanna Dabrowska** (Mercury Rising Percussion Ensemble), **Daren Taylor** (*Legally Blonde* tour), **Bretton Hunter** (*Wicked* tour), **Kelsey Harelson** (Deas Vail), **Denny Agosto** (Oceana), **Chris Powell** (Love And Theft), **Jay Weinberg** (Madball), **William Goldsmith** (Sunny Day Real Estate), **Eran Asias** (Julian Lennon, Patty Smyth), **Jamin Marshall** (Larry And His Flask), **Marlon Lewis** (independent), **Taylor Gordon** (independent), **Steve Nistor** (independent), **Justin Tyson** (independent), **Louis Cato** (independent), and **Mike Johnston** (artist and education roster).

Regal Tip welcomes **Don Henley** (Eagles), **Johnny Fay** (Tragically Hip), **Robert Sweet** (Stryper), **Matt Chamberlain** (independent), **Scott Rockenfield** (Queensrÿche), **Jake Goss** (Jars Of Clay), **Jay "Taz" Kuzara** (Hit N Run), and **Luisito Quintero** (Latin great) to its family of artists.

Gretsch Drums and Gibraltar Hardware have announced the addition of **Zac Farro** (Paramore) to their endorser lists.

Meinl has added **Furio Chirico** to its roster of cymbal artists.

Joining Paiste are **Scott Devours** (Roger Daltrey), **Brian Pruitt** (Nashville studio), **Jack Lawless** (Jonas Brothers), **Kevin Rice** (the Virgins), **Robert Ortiz** (Escape The Fate), **Amy Cesari** (the Donnas), **Jason Morris** (Crash Kings), **Jeff Brown** (Bucky Covington), **Bobby Drake** (the Hold Steady), **Chris Thompson** (Eli Young Band), **Gabriel Lastra** (Reik), **Dave Astor** (Pathology), **David McGraw** (Cattle Decapitation), **Janne Parviainen** (Ensiferum), **Martin Innerbichler** (Graveworm), **Luka van de Poel** (DeWolff), **Brad Kora** (Kora), **Stefan Zteff Orhamn** (Fatal Smile), **Julien Kravetz** (the Glam), **Ben Carter** (Evile), **Gavin Filmer** (Shapes), and **Chris Durling** (Scars On 45).

New additions to Shine Drums' list of endorsers are **Joey Williams** (Justin Bieber) and **Greg Morehead** (Ludacris).

Stephen Perkins (Jane's Addiction) is using Hearos High Fidelity Ear Plugs.

Andy Ziker (educator/Jed's A Millionaire) has joined the Aquarian roster.

The Dream Cymbals artist roster includes **Kevin Lamar** (Asher Roth), **Adam Halferty** (3OH!3), **Trey Gray** (Brooks & Dunn), **Max Soria** (Valencia), **Conor Sullivan** (Ice Nine Kills), **Patrick Guyer** (Select Start), **Derek Davis** (Big D & the Kids Table), **Alfredo Silva** (Channel 3), **Chachi Darin** (the A.K.A.s), **Ben Graham** (Cheap Girls), and **Dennis Wilson** (Every Avenue).

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KIT OF THE MONTH

SONIC CANDY

This month's setup is from Kamal Aboul-Hosn of New York City, who's been playing drums for twenty years. Twelve years ago, when he was in high school, Kamal says, "I promised myself that when I finished college, was done with grad school, and found a good job, I would reward myself by buying the drums of my dreams." A PhD in computer science and a job as a software engineer later, he was able to make that dream come true.

Aboul-Hosn's set is a custom eight-piece Orange County Drum & Percussion rig in "candy burgundy" finish, with a 20-ply vented snare. The drums are complemented by eighteen Zildjian cymbals, some of which are Sound Lab prototypes acquired during the Zildjian On Tour stop at the Long Island Drum Center. The set also has an array of Roland electronic pads and triggers, sent through a TD-20 sound module to a laptop running Apple MainStage. The hardware is all Tama, and the drumheads are Evans. The kit is outfitted with a complete set of Shure microphones, so Aboul-Hosn can record at the drop of a hat.

"For me, these drums represent much more than just a nice kit to play," Kamal says. "They represent the culmination of a great deal of hard work and the fulfillment of a promise."

Photo Submission: Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to billya@moderndrummer.com (show "Kit Of The Month" in the subject line of the message) or burned onto a disc and sent to Kit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288.

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